This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

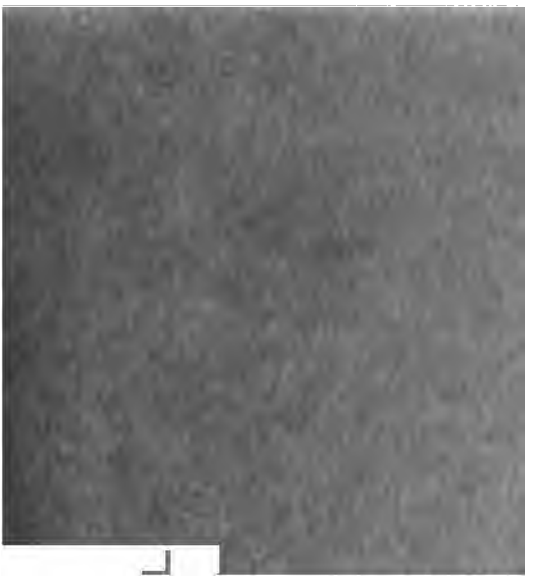
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

LIBRARIES
07971 8



MYSTERY ISLAND

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

"SHE WAS CALM NOW, BUT HER FLUSHED CHEEKS WERE WET WITH TEARS."

MYSTERY ISLAND

BY EDWARD H. HURST

With a Frontispiece in Colour by

GRISWOLD TYNG

DONATED BY THE MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

MERCANTILE LIBRARY,
NEW YORK.

No. 405582

BOSTON ✦ L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY ✦ MDCCCCVII

M.Sm

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
2787294
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1926 L

Copyright, 1907
BY L. C. PAGE & COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)

Entered at Stationers' Hall, London

All rights reserved

First Impression, September, 1907

COLONIAL PRESS
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	One Night in Tampa	1
II.	A Boat and a Bottle	19
III.	Sovereign of the Cypress	29
IV.	A Camp in the Everglades	40
V.	My Departure Is Postponed	55
VI.	I Settle Two Questions	68
VII.	Muriel	81
VIII.	A Reluctant Summons	91
IX.	The End of a Journey	106
X.	What I Saw in the Paper	118
XI.	Brutus Retrieves and I Am Incautious	129
XII.	Hostilities	142
XIII.	I Change My Quarters	155
XIV.	Outwitted	167
XV.	A Night Alarm	180
XVI.	I Take No Chances	197
XVII.	Drawing Parallels	209
XVIII.	A Bequest	231
XIX.	A Crisis	245
XX.	Waiting	261
XXI.	Farewell to the Island — and Muriel	274
XXII.	Tom Delivers His Message	286
XXIII.	My Search Is Ended	297
XXIV.	Muriel's Answer	308

MERCANTILE LIBRARY
NEW YORK.

MYSTERY ISLAND

CHAPTER I

ONE NIGHT IN TAMPA

My marriage to Effie was one of those unfortunate mistakes which the young and thoughtless too often make. It occurred in my senior year at college, when I went to spend the Christmas holidays with my room-mate, Roy Armstrong, at his home in St. Louis. I first saw Effie at a dance given Roy's sister, Ellen, and two weeks after that meeting we were man and wife.

Of course our families were surprised and angry; but they forgave us on condition that I return to college and graduate, allowing Effie to remain in St. Louis with her uncle — her nearest living relative.

Our consent was reluctantly given; we parted and I passed the remainder of the term in a fool's paradise of rosy expectations. By sheer good luck I successfully stood the test of the final examina-

tion; for in my mind was room for no thoughts but of Effie. We had arranged to live with my parents in Louisville, where I could complete my education with a course in medicine, and the week after Commencement I took my wife there.

Soon we discovered our blunder. Never were two persons more unsuited to each other. If, as a husband, I felt entitled to more of Effie's time and attentions than really was my due, Effie certainly yielded me less. After the first months there were continual bickerings and quarrels, growing more serious all the time. I am convinced that there was never any real love between us; for at no time did either try to bear with the other's faults.

Effie was by nature a coquette. I do not believe that in the beginning evil was in the girl's heart. It was only a silly but harmless desire for admirers among the other sex, which her beauty and vivacity made it easy to secure. Perhaps I treated her folly more seriously than I should. At any rate my remonstrances seemed only to exasperate and urge her into more imprudent conduct. This, I think, was still from a wish to spite me rather than from any intention of wrong-doing.

We were hopelessly alienated long before Gridley became the principal factor in our unhappiness. I did not know until Effie and I were married that

she and Gridley were engaged when I met her. There is no doubt Effie cared for him; for often in our numerous jangles she reproached herself for the caprice that had separated them. Mysterious letters which she received, postmarked St. Louis, caused many a heated passage between us; but I never saw Gridley till three years after our wedding, when his business brought him to reside in Louisville.

He made little attempt to conceal his infatuation. He openly sought my wife, and soon gossip connected their names in a way that drove me frantic. He played his part with consummate skill, affecting to be wretched and weary of life as a consequence of her treachery, yet condemned to love her as devotedly as ever. He never went to a social function unless sure of meeting Effie, and he never on the street or in other places permitted himself to be seen with other women.

My poor wife's vanity was flattered and her heart touched. In vain I warned her. She continued to accept his attentions and, in defiance of my commands, to invite him to our home, till I told him in her presence of the talk that his visits were creating and politely but firmly informed him that they must cease. He expressed regret that his friendship had been so cruelly misinterpreted and assured me he would comply with my wishes.

We understood each other. I knew he would persist in his attentions and he was aware I entertained that conviction. He knew, too, I would have liked to throw off all disguise and boldly call him to account, and was deterred only by the certainty of ruining my wife's reputation and of smirching the family name, which never until now had been touched by scandal.

I had given up the practice of medicine after the first year owing to the death of my father and the duties which consequently devolved upon me as the head of his extensive jobbing business. These made great demands upon me, and I was unable to spare little time for those social pleasures in which my wife delighted and in which she continued to mingle, apparently without missing me.

I had forbidden Effie to speak to Gridley, but I knew she was ignoring my commands. However, my vehemence in our recent quarrels had frightened her and she did not give her admirer as much open encouragement. But it did not tend to quiet my fears to feel sure that they were meeting by stealth.

My mother survived my father less than a year. She, as he, died without knowledge of the crisis approaching in my home life. They saw, indeed, that my union with Effie had failed to bring me

happiness; but they heard none of the stories that hinted at impending shame. Thank God I was able to keep those from their ears!

My domestic troubles, my business cares and my grief for my parents proved too much even for my robust constitution. A month's vacation was declared by my physician to be a necessity, and, as it was mid-winter, Florida was selected as the place.

If anything had been waiting to complete the estrangement between us, my wife's cruel behaviour at this time would have supplied it. She was heartlessly indifferent to my successive bereavements and seemingly did not share the uneasiness of my friends and physician. At first she refused to go South with me; but I was aroused and speedily told her she should have no choice. Then she consented with a better grace than I expected.

I left the affairs of the house in charge of Lumley, my father's trusted manager, and, in the latter part of February, with Effie and my bosom friend, Tom Wentworth, stepped aboard the train with baggage checked through to Tampa. Effie appeared so subdued and thoughtful that I began to wonder whether she were penitent.

About the middle of our second week in Tampa I saw Gridley on the street. Tom and I were returning to the hotel at dusk from a walk through

the little city. My wife was not with us. At first Gridley tried to escape our notice by shrinking into the shadow of a doorway; but when he saw he was observed, he stepped boldly out, bowed with cold politeness, and passed down the street.

I stared after him till my rage quite overcame me, and I was prevented with difficulty by Tom from following and bringing our quarrel to a head. My friend persuaded me to return to the hotel, where a little later I succeeded in escaping his vigilance.

In my struggle for self-control during dinner I attempted to steady myself with a stiff glass of brandy, but while my excitement prevented intoxication, the effect of the stimulant was to increase my jealous anger and to destroy the self-command which was at such a moment essential. When I went to my room after the meal I found my wife dressing to attend a ball at the hotel. Our wrangle began about that. I told her she should not go — that out of respect for me and for the dead she ought not to wish to go. She laughed in my face and reiterated her intention.

Then I accused her of going to meet Gridley. She was plainly surprised and alarmed that I knew he was in town; but she quickly recovered her composure and informed me I was quite right,

adding that Gridley was in Tampa at her invitation. At this announcement my anger overcame me.

"I warn you that I too will be at the ball," I said; "and if you dare even to recognize Gridley, I swear I will insult him publicly and drag you back to your room by force!"

She heard my threat with taunting incredulity and only laughed scornfully as I stormed from the room. Going down stairs I searched the hotel and its grounds for Gridley, but without success. His name was not on the register, and evidently he was quartered elsewhere. I went back to the hotel. Tom, whom I ran across a moment before, tried to reason with me; but I was now beyond the control of anybody.

After a while I took a seat on the veranda, where I could see into the ballroom, and waited. My wife was late in coming down. When she entered Tom was with her, talking earnestly, and apparently she was paying close attention to him. They had not been present five minutes when Gridley appeared. As soon as I saw him, I sprang from my seat, passed through the lobby and entered the room.

Gridley had caught sight of my wife and was smilingly crossing to address her. On her part was a moment of indecision. She swept the room with

an apprehensive glance. But I was screened from her view by a large, potted plant, and, turning from Tom, she extended her hand in cordial welcome to Gridley.

At that instant, as I stepped from my place of concealment all three of them saw me at once. Effie grew pale and shrank back, Gridley nodded indifferently, and Tom made a movement as if to come between. I reached them in a few strides. I was utterly beside myself with passion and cared nothing for scandal now.

"Madam," I said to the cowering Effie, "you thought I would not keep my word. You shall see to the contrary."

Then before Tom could prevent, I struck Gridley in the face. He was taken so completely by surprise that he stood perfectly still for a moment without attempting to resent the blow. I started toward Effie who ran screaming from the room. Then I turned back to my rival, who, white with fury, was now held in restraint by Tom and others who had been attracted by the disturbance.

"If you have not left this city by morning —" I began, but I was not allowed to finish my threat. The crowd forced me away and hurried me through the lobby into the grounds, where, seeing that I had in some measure regained my composure, they

permitted me to sink upon one of the benches. In the reaction from my outburst I had no idea of the passage of time. It was, however, fully a half hour before Tom came out from the hotel.

"Gentlemen," he said to those who continued to watch me, "you need not trouble yourselves further. I assure you that Mr. Lindsay will make no more disturbance to-night."

In the muttered reply of one of the men I could only distinguish the words "police" and "prosecution."

"Not necessary — the matter has been adjusted," was Tom's impatient assurance.

He left them, and, coming to me, took my arm without a word and led me out into the shrubbery. We walked a long time in silence, going down to the river and back, and traversing again and again the more secluded walks, though at that late hour the grounds were probably everywhere deserted. At last Tom spoke.

"We must leave Tampa tomorrow."

I stopped, tore my arm from his grasp and stared at him.

"It is best," he urged, gently. "This affair can be hushed. I have taken effective steps to keep it out of the papers, and none but those who actually saw

it need know of it. By taking Effie to St. Augustine you can avoid notoriety."

"No!" I objected, passionately; "he sha'n't say he ran me out of town!"

"He himself has already gone," said my friend, calmly.

"The coward!" I burst out in the fury of disappointed vengeance. Though I had warned him, I did not expect nor did I want him to go thus tamely. "Does he expect to escape me? I'll follow him to —"

"Listen, David," was Tom's peremptory command. "It's fortunate that Gridley *is* a coward. After what occurred to-night he will not dare approach Effie again, and fear also will silence his tongue. You are rid of him, and Effie may now come to her senses. So all this may have been for the best, if only you will drop it here."

Just then came the sound of hurried footsteps and a voice calling for Mr. Wentworth.

"Here!" answered Tom.

We heard a gratified exclamation, and one of the hotel servants appeared around a curve in the walk. He paused about twenty steps from us and, in a tone of suppressed excitement, asked to speak to my friend.

Tom went to him and uttered a cry of surprise

at something he said in a low tone. I could see the man's agitation communicated itself to him, though when he turned to me after an instant's hesitation, he evidently was at pains to appear calm.

"I must leave you a moment, David," he said. "Don't go back to the hotel before I return — I've something more to say to you. Old fellow, I'll ask you to remember the pledge I gave for your good conduct."

With that, he was off with the man who had summoned him, and, as soon as they passed out of my sight amid the shrubbery, I heard them quicken their steps into a run as they sped toward the hotel.

My interest in this incident was only momentary. The absorbing question was, how should I conduct myself in this crisis? Must I subdue my longing for blood, seek a reconciliation with Effie and take her away, as my friend advised? Even while he counselled I had heard the midnight train leaving the hotel station, and realized that, for the time at least, Gridley was out of my reach.

But no, he was not! I remembered that the train, after leaving the hotel, made a long stop at the main station in the city. No doubt it was there at this moment — there was yet time to settle with my enemy!

Madly I rushed through the streets of the sleep-

ing town on my errand of destruction. But before I sighted the station, I knew I was too late; for I heard the clang of the locomotive's bell and then the puffing and rumbling that told the train was on its way.

I sank gasping against a convenient wall and cursed impotently. A cab passed rapidly down the street toward the hotel; but its occupants could not see me, as I stood in the shadow. I followed slowly, crossed the bridge over the Hillsboro' river and had almost reached the entrance to the hotel grounds when I decided not to return yet.

What was I to say to Effie?

I turned to the left and went down to the bay, placid, beautiful in the moonlight. Strolling back to the bridge, I leaned over the rail and watched the fishing smacks and other small craft anchored there. Then aimlessly I made my way back into the silent town.

A glare of many-coloured lights marked the entrance to a saloon. I pushed open the door and went in.

The barkeeper was bending over a table in the back of the place talking to a tall, red-faced, roughly-clad man, who sat with his chair tilted against the wall and with a glass in his hand. My entrance interrupted a joke the barkeeper was tell-

ing, and both men turned and stared hard at me, something of amusement coming into their looks. But perhaps the spectacle of a hatless, dishevelled man in a dress suit at that early morning hour may not have been uncommon there during the winter when the great hotel and all the city are filled with strangers on pleasure bent.

The white-aproned barkeeper advanced bowing and smiling.

"Whiskey — straight!" was my curt order.

The man at the table pricked up his ears with new interest.

"That soun's like Kaintucky," he drawled, surveying me quizzically.

"And what if I *am* from Kentucky?" I snapped, ready to take offence at anything.

"Nothin'," answered the red-faced man, rising and staggering to the bar, "nothin' except that bein' from old Kaintuck' myself, I say in that case the drinks are on me. Bill Redd, sir; home port, Sarasota; up to Tampie with my pard in the smack on a lark. Take it you been seein' a little fun yo'self."

Here Bill winked, assumed a most sagacious expression, and ended with a roar of laughter.

I had sense enough left to know it was probably best to accept the character he had assigned me.

The barkeeper had pocketed Mr. Redd's money before I could protest, and I found myself bound to accept his courtesy, though by no means pleased with his familiarity.

"Nothin' like it fer liftin' the weight off a man's heart," observed my nautical friend, eying sentimentally the glass he had emptied at a single draught. "I'm a man of many sorrers, Mr. What's-Your-Name; but they don't bother me now."

Under other conditions I should have resented his familiarity and found some plausible excuse for quitting his company at once. But in the stress of my mental excitement I was, indeed, hardly conscious where or in whose company I was and the glass of liquor which I had just drank did not tend to reduce the confusion of my senses.

I must have been unsociable enough at best but Mr. Redd was voluble with the loose tongue of too much whiskey and when I had declined to drink again he insisted that we must not part until I had seen his smack the "Daisy," — the excellences of which he had been loudly asserting. And when, to satisfy him, I had agreed to walk to the waterside, with an apparent inspiration he proposed a run down the bay by way of exhibiting her good points.

"Nothin' like a dash over the water to brighten

a man up," he asserted with his characteristic wink. "And we'll be back by sun-up, or before, if you like."

As I have said, my mind was still confused by the conflicting emotions which the events of the evening had aroused. I felt that I could not meet Effie that night. I had arrived at no conclusions as to the course that I should pursue. And as I knew that Tom, when he found me, would endeavour to work a reconciliation, I desired to avoid him also for the moment. And most of all I felt that I needed an opportunity to collect my thoughts and straighten out the problems which had thrust themselves upon me. So, wild as the proposal was and uncongenial as my companion might be, I seized upon the suggestion which would ensure that, for the balance of the night at least, I might evade any arguments regarding my future action.

"Come on," said I, "I'm ready for anything."

We reached the "Daisy" and clambered aboard. Bill hoisted sail and slipped her moorings. A stiff breeze was blowing and we stood out from the bridge. Two men came hurrying down the street from the direction of the hotel.

"Good-bye!" I shouted, forgetting myself for the moment in the consciousness that I was sure of a few hours for self-adjustment.

One of the men ran excitedly to the rail of the bridge, and, as he leaned far over peering at us I saw that it was Tom.

"No? it's not you, David?" he called incredulously. "In God's name, man, come back here! We've been searching for you everywhere."

Come back! back to confront the ghastly realities of the wreck of my married life and before I had had the opportunity to think which opened before me. Not I.

"Good-bye! good-bye!" I repeated; "I'll be back by sunrise!"

The "Daisy" had caught the wind and was speeding out into the bay. Tom appeared to grow frantic. He ran down to the water's edge and shouted something I could not understand, owing to the increasing distance between us. Then he motioned us wildly, imploringly, to return. Running back to the top of the bridge, he repeated his entreaties in gestures which could not be mistaken. I was almost amused by his antics and found myself laughing at his apparent concern.

The last I saw of him he had come down to the water again, and, with the assistance of his companion, was trying to loose a skiff moored there, evidently in the forlorn hope of overtaking us.

A moment they were visible beneath the lights

on the bridge; then Bill changed our course and they were hidden by intervening walls.

Out to sea we drove steadily before a strengthening wind. Bill lashed the tiller, resumed his place in the stern, made a gesture as if to call my attention to something remarkable he was about to do, and stooping, drew a quart bottle of whiskey from under the seat.

Mr. Redd now removed the stopper and winked at me two or three times very hard. Then, seeing that I made no remark, he offered the bottle to me. If I had had the sense to accept it and the courage to hurl it into the sea, this story would never have been written.

But in my mental abstraction I had not realized that Bill was considerably intoxicated at the time when we set sail and even now did not comprehend the danger that threatened us. So I merely declined the proffered drink and Bill with sage gravity remarked:

"All right, all the more for them as wants it."

He raised the bottle to his own lips and it was only at the sight of the long drink that followed that my alarm began to awaken. I watched to see where he had placed the bottle when he had finished, hoping that I might be able to secure it without causing him offence, but when he laid it down it

was close to his hand and in a very few moments he was pouring another large potation down his throat. Thoroughly alarmed now, I remonstrated with him. My remark, phrased as reasonably as I was able, excited his anger, and resulted in still another drink accompanied by an insulting remark. The danger of my position now burst upon me in full force. With little knowledge of a sail-boat I was headed out to sea in the company of a man fast becoming crazed with drink. I realized that argument was vain and that I must secure the remainder of the whiskey at any cost. I have only a confused recollection of what followed. I know I made an attempt to seize the bottle and that Bill resisted my efforts. I remember a struggle and a sharp pain in my head following a heavy blow — and then I became unconscious.

CHAPTER II

A BOAT AND A BOTTLE

WHEN I regained my consciousness it was broad daylight. As I opened my eyes I found that my shirt bosom was stained with blood which had flowed from a cut over my temple. I lifted my head and tried to look around me; but the effort was so painful that I let it fall back on my arm with a groan and remained lying as still as I could in the bottom of the boat. In that momentary glance, however, I had seen that Bill retained his seat in the stern, and almost immediately I felt him scrambling to where I lay, and heard his senseless mutterings as he pressed the now empty bottle against my cheek. I pushed it away in disgust and managed to utter the single word, " water."

After endless fumblings and maudlin sounds succeeding Bill's laboured progress back to the rear of his craft, I heard him again approaching. The boat lurched, throwing him prostrate upon me, while the heavy jug he carried descended with great violence, barely missing my head.

I seized and clung to it as if fearful it might take wings and fly away. Writhing from beneath my companion's weight, I ascertained the jug was uninjured and none of its contents spilled. Yet, though mad with thirst, it was long before I could muster courage to make the exertion necessary to relieve it; for at my least movement the pain in my head became almost unbearable. At last I summoned the resolution; but so weak and faint was I that three trials were necessary before I could remove the stopper, tilt the jug, and let some of the water run down my throat. When I had drunk it, however, I was sufficiently refreshed to be able to bind my handkerchief, moistened with water, about my aching head. Then, exhausted, I sank back and lay in a state of semi-consciousness. For some time I remained inert in the bottom of the boat, thinking, when I had the power of thought, only of the pain I was undergoing. I knew the hot sun was beating down upon me and that the breeze continued to blow. Indistinct murmurings and shufflings at my feet informed me that Bill had crawled back to his post, but whether he was able to direct the movements of the "Daisy" I could not tell. And, indeed, at first I did not care. Very slowly my condition improved, and I began to be capable of thought and then of action.

First I wondered what was the time of day and whether we were near Tampa. These questions several times suggested themselves before I made an effort to answer them. By degrees the memory of last night's events became clear. I recalled my trouble with Gridley; Tom's efforts in my behalf; my rash departure with the worthy Mr. Redd, which had led to my present predicament. I remembered we were to have been back by sunrise, and I thought of the sensation my absence would occasion. With a mighty struggle I drew myself into a sitting posture and stared around.

Bill was seated exactly as I had seen him the night before, except that his attitude and features were now expressive of the last stage of intoxication. I called to him, but his only response was a stupid grin and an obvious but futile attempt at his wonderful wink. He was in momentary risk of falling overboard where he sat; so I seized his feet and dragged him down into the boat till his back rested against the seat in the stern. I did not accomplish this easily — not that Mr. Redd opposed my good offices, for indeed he appeared to appreciate my purpose and to wish to assist me; but because of my weakened condition. Once ensconced in a position of comparative safety, my honest friend allowed his head to fall upon his breast and

resigned himself to oblivion from which I saw it would be useless to try to arouse him.

Night was approaching and the sky was overcast. I strained my eyes in every direction, but could see neither land nor a sail. I felt in my pocket for my watch. It was not there, but I found it in the bottom of the boat where it had fallen as I lay insensible. I had not wound it, and it had run down. I swept the sky with a more intelligent glance. The sun was nowhere in sight. It was completely obscured by the heavy, ragged, tumbled-up masses of clouds that extended from the circumference of the horizon to the zenith. However, I knew it was near the setting; for the clouding of the heavens could not of itself account for the increasing dusk.

I felt a sudden sinking of the heart. Could it be Bill had *not* altered the course of the "Daisy" and that we were speeding out to sea instead of approaching Tampa? I must secure some information from him, if possible.

I shook him vigorously and threw water in his face, but was rewarded with only a few incoherent mutterings. I renewed my efforts and called his name loudly into his ear; it was to no purpose. Resigning the hopeless task, I tried to decide what was best to do.

If the sun set to starboard, I would know we were running south; if to larboard, that we were heading back to Tampa. Anxiously I searched for the faintest trace of the glory of the dying day; but in the dense mass of vapour was no opening through which it could struggle. But through this heaped-up blackness, as I looked astern, where it loomed most sombre and threatening, cut the sharp radiance of a jagged streak, and presently the low rumble of distant thunder came floating across the water.

A chill ran through me as I turned my eyes once more ahead and strained them in vain for a glimpse of land. The short twilight was upon me and would soon deepen into complete darkness; for the moon did not rise till late, nor could she then afford much light if the heavens remained thus overcast.

I searched the smack for a lantern, found one, and placed it where I could light it when the time came. In my rummaging I discovered the remnants of a boiled ham and a loaf of bread on which Bill had evidently made the run up from Sarasota. Although in my weakened condition the food seemed coarse and unappetizing I managed to eat a little of it and felt stronger afterwards.

Of course I had no means of knowing what our progress had been during the day, or whether the

wind had continued all the time at the rate it was blowing when I began to take note of my surroundings. However, if Bill had steered for Sarasota or turned back to Tampa, I did not think we could be far from one of these places. Therefore, acting upon the presumption that we were heading for one or the other, I took all possible advantage of the strengthening breeze, hoping it would carry us to safety before we were overtaken by night and the threatening storm. Its energy was momentarily increasing and as I held the tiller I was trying to crush down the terrible fear that Bill had let the smack drift out to sea and that we were now rushing madly across the Gulf far from any port and in circumstances of peril that might appall the stoutest heart.

I lit the lantern and resumed my seat. It was now quite dark, and if land were near I could only hope to see it by the flashes of lightning which had become frequent, while the thunder crashed and rolled as if it would tear the heavens asunder. The breeze stiffened into a gale which roughened the sea, and presently the "Daisy" began to mount the summits of giant waves and to drop thence into deep depressions with the suddenness of a fall from some lofty height. But I did not shorten sail; for the smack was a staunch little craft, and I reasoned

that unless the menace of being swamped became too great, I was justified by my hope of reaching land in utilizing all the means of speed given me.

It must have been between ten and eleven o'clock when the storm reached its height. It could not have been severe, but in my helpless condition it seemed to me I had never known one so terrific. Warned by a violent gust, I hastily lowered sail. I was none too soon. At once the utmost fury of the elements was loosed upon me. I have only a confused impression of it all — the wild, swirling, hissing, roaring, tumbling waters, flashing beneath the streams of fire from the hideous blackness above; the awful bellowing and shrieking of the wind, as it drove the torrents of rain horizontally before it; the deafening boom of the thunder!

I clung dazed to my tossing boat, praying dumbly with such coherence as my fear admitted, in agonized supplication for that life which a few hours ago I had fancied myself ready to resign.

Suddenly the recumbent form beside me changed its position and pressed hard against my knee. I thought the motion of the boat had thrown it there; but, when I looked, I saw by the dim, blurred light of the swaying lantern that Bill was groping under the seat for something. My heart gave a great bound of hope and joy.

"Bill!" I called; "Bill!"

He struggled to his knee, and I saw he held in his hand the object sought — the bottle! His lips moved meaninglessly, then became set in a senseless grin; his eyes were open, but in them was no recognition. Spellbound, I saw him slowly raise the empty bottle to his mouth, while he distorted his visage with that inimitable wink.

A heavy sea hurled us on one side, and with the instinct of self-preservation I clutched with both hands madly at the rail. Without an effort to save himself, limp, unconscious, Bill went over backward into the sea.

I sprang up and tried to catch him, but it was too late. The lantern was torn from its fastenings and swallowed in the waters; but by a flash whose glow seemed to linger in the air I saw my wretched companion sink — the fatal bottle clasped in his hand, his features set in that ghastly leer. For many a night afterward it haunted my dreams.

Rescue was out of the question; for the smack, utterly beyond control, was at the mercy of the storm, and had been swept instantly away from the scene of the catastrophe. Besides, poor Bill had gone down without a struggle as soon as he struck the water. Sick with horror I crouched in the bottom of my heaving, straining craft, my arms wound

around the mast in a despairing grip. Every moment I thought would be my last.

But after a while — it seemed an age — the storm began to subside, and I caught a glimpse of the moon peering out at the edge of an inky thunder-cloud. But she darted back immediately, as if frightened by the tumultuous fury of the sea, leaving me again in total darkness; for only at long intervals now did the lightning afford its weird illumination.

Dawn came, but with it no sun by which to steer. Nevertheless I hoisted sail and ran on before the light breeze, knowing not whither it was carrying me. Anything seemed better than to lie idly tossing. In my drenched garments I suffered cruelly from cold. My hunger I had relieved with some more of the ham and bread.

As the day wore on I could with difficulty keep awake; but not until the sea became calmer did I dare to lash the wheel and lie down. Then I think no mortal ever experienced more horrid dreams. But in spite of them I slept long; for when I awoke the breeze had shifted and freshened, the clouds had cleared away and the sun was shining to starboard not far from the horizon.

As soon as I could collect my scattered faculties,

I brought the "Daisy" to, and headed her for what at last I knew to be the east.

The sun went down astern and twilight began to deepen into night, while vainly I peered ahead for land. The stars were out and it must have been near nine o'clock when I thought I saw a long, dark streak lying close against the water. I was not mistaken; for soon the shadowy line became distinct and broader, and between it and the sea stretched the narrow white ribbon of the Florida beach.

I shouted, I waved my arms, I wept for joy!

As I neared the land I looked anxiously for a light, which would mean a haven of rest and human sympathy; but none appeared.

Suddenly the "Daisy" grounded with a shock that pitched me from my seat. She swung broadside to the land and careened on her side, throwing me into water up to my chin.

Of course I had not meant to leave the smack until assured she had brought me to a place of safety; but this accident left me no alternative. I continued to cling to her as she drifted shoreward till she stuck on the sandy bottom. Then, securing what remained of the ham, which fortunately had not been washed overboard, I tied it around my waist with a piece of rope and waded ashore.

CHAPTER III

SOVEREIGN OF THE CYPRESS

WHIMSICALLY enough, my emotions as I set foot upon the land were those of amusement. I could not help anticipating the open-mouthed wonder that my unexpected and most absurd appearance was sure to create in those to whom I first presented myself. Certainly no more ridiculous caricature of a shipwrecked wanderer ever trod the stage of comic opera. Hatless, uncombed, and with a soiled handkerchief about my head; my teeth chattering with cold; my dress suit soiled and tattered by rough usage in the boat clinging in shreds to my dripping body; a mighty ham-bone with a slender remnant of meat attached swung to my middle with a stout cable, — such was the wretched spectacle I afforded!

I crossed the wide beach and scrambled up the low, sandy bank beyond to take my bearings. As far as I could make out in the uncertain star-light the country was a prairie, though I thought I could descry the misty outlines of timber at no great dis-

tance from the sea. I saw no hospitable light streaming from door or window; or anything to indicate the presence of man. I shouted, but the only response was a faint echo, which proved me not mistaken in supposing the forest near. Selecting a spot where I was screened from the chill breeze by a dense growth of scrub palmetto, I took off my clothes and wrung them as dry as possible. Then I replaced them, and, while I ate some of the ham, fell to considering what should be my next move. Of course I had no means of knowing on what part of the Florida coast chance had thrown me. Perhaps it was not the mainland, but one of the islands that extend along it. In any event it seemed wisest not to move far from my present position till I was aided in my search for a human habitation by the light of day. Relief might be at hand and I might blunder away from it in the darkness. Nevertheless, I believed I would run no risk by a brisk walk up the coast; for beyond the necessity to get my blood to circulating and to complete the drying of my clothes, it might result in my discovering a fisherman's hamlet or a farm-house, and at the worst I could retrace my steps and be more comfortable for my physical exertion.

My progress along the bank was so much impeded by the tall, matted grass and sword palmetto

that I soon descended to the beach and only at intervals climbed to higher ground to view my surroundings. I had proceeded for over an hour when I noted the land was descending to the level of the sea and becoming marshy. I turned back and, as soon as I came to a suitable place, lay down to wait for day. My bed was in the tall grass and I was protected from the wind by the low, thick undergrowth.

I cannot say that I slept. The uncertainty and danger of my position, the memory of my horrible experience on the water and speculations upon what was thought of my absence in Tampa and at home, as well as upon what might result from it in this crisis in my domestic affairs, would have banished slumber even had the physical discomforts of cold, wet garments, and a rough couch not existed. At intervals I rose and paced up and down the beach. Toward morning, indeed, I fell into a state of semi-consciousness in which sharp exaggeration and added horrors were lent to the mental picture that floated through my disordered brain. Long before the first gray streak appeared above the tree-tops, I knew that the fever was fastening its grasp upon me. I ached all over, my head felt heavy and throbbed with a dull pain, my throat was parched, my eyes were hot and swollen and

my least movement sent the chills running through me. In hope that the increasing light would reveal shelter and aid near my miserable resting-place, I waited until I could distinguish every detail of the landscape.

To the west lay the gulf, while along it, a few feet above its level, ran a narrow strip of land covered with tall, coarse grass, dotted here and there with clumps of sword palmetto, with now and then a thicket of black-jack. Beyond was a dense forest of cypress, which opposite to the point where I stood approached quite near to the sea, so that I could see the stagnant waters of the swamp around the bases of the trees. My advance northward was cut off by an inlet of the gulf which extended back nearly to the cypress, the ground between being marshy and impassable. I therefore directed my steps southward, walking rapidly along the beach. Evidently the tide had carried the "Daisy" out to sea; for I saw no sign of her nor of any other craft. The water as the land seemed deserted save for the numerous gulls that winged their tireless flight back and forth over both. As I advanced, however, the country began to look more promising. The treeless expanse broadened, shouldering the swamp into the interior, and into the widening angle began to creep the dark crests of the pines.

As the sun rose and gained in strength, I began to suffer cruelly from thirst, aggravated of course by my fever and the exertion I was making. But I reasoned that it was better to remain near the coast than to wander into the woods on a quest likely to prove both doubtful and hazardous. If I were on an island, that course would sooner or later, according to the size of the island, demonstrate the fact; if on the mainland, bring me in time to some town or fisherman's shack; while there was always the prospect of my finding water to drink at the junction of a river or creek with the gulf. Besides, should this part of the State be uninhabited, I might succeed in attracting the notice of some passing vessel. But after I had trudged on and on for hours my resolution began to falter under the tortures I was enduring, and I began to cast longing glances toward the pines beneath whose cool shadows my fancy pictured bubbling springs and clear, running brooks. At last the temptation became irresistible; I left the coast and plunged into the woods.

The disappointments, the anguish, the horrors of that long search for water are beyond my power to tell. With every step my suffering increased. Water! water! water! — I must have water! — I was perishing for water! I lost sight of every other

idea. Blindly I staggered onward, paying no heed to where I was going. I knew indeed that the sea was no longer in sight and that all around me far as the eye could reach arose the straight, countless columns of the pines whose interlacing boughs formed a sombre, unbroken canopy over my head. Sometimes the white sand was bare except for a scattered coating of needles; but occasionally I had to force my way through heavy undergrowth that tore my clothing and pricked my flesh till I was bleeding from a score of smarting wounds. Never did I sit down to rest, though my limbs were sinking under me with fatigue. Now and then after some particularly hard struggle to get clear of the besetting palmetto, I leaned against a tree till I could recover my breath and regain a little strength; but in a moment I was off again on my agonized quest. More than once I caught myself raving; and once, when I paused, as I have described, a gay-plumaged bird lit on the ground near me and I remember imploring him in my helplessness and delirium to guide me to the cooling stream where he had slacked his own thirst, and how, when he flew into the tree-tops with a mocking cry, I cursed him and wept aloud.

Hope had almost deserted me when I found relief. But no clear, sweet spring or sparkling

stream yielded me its coveted riches. I felt the ground slip beneath my feet. I stooped and examined it; it was moist! Through the gathering gloom of the evening I peered and espied to my left the ghostly gray of the cypress. With a feeble cheer I reeled toward the swamp, falling flat on my face at the first black, stagnant pool and drinking, drinking, drinking of the fetid water till it seemed I would suck up the very ooze beneath it. Then I bathed my burning head and lay down contentedly in the mud.

What remains is like a fearful nightmare. The dread sovereign of the cypress, the gaunt, wild fever had me in his relentless clutches. Sometimes it was night, sometimes it was day; though whether the sun rose and set more than twice after I sank down by that puddle in the cypress, I do not know. During my brief lucid intervals, I tried to find my way back to the coast by observing his course; but in spite of my resolve I would drift into the region of the unreal even as I made my calculations. Horrible shapes and fancies beset me. Gridley lay in ambush for me at every turn; and when I glided around to surprise him, as he crouched with cocked weapon and eyes riveted where he expected me, he would spring to his feet and make off with coward yells for mercy, while, frantic with hate, I tore

madly through the tangled vines and bushes in fruitless pursuit. Sometimes Tom was by my side pleading with me to avoid the spots where my enemy lay in wait; but I furiously rejected his counsel.

Suddenly I came upon Gridley seated with Effie by his side in the midst of a little thicket of holly. His arm was around her; and I saw him press his lips to hers. With a cry of vengeance I was upon them. I threw Effie aside, clutched Gridley's arm, jerked him around so that he faced me, and, as he turned his face away and uttered shriek after shriek of mortal terror and agony, I plunged my knife again and again into his bosom, waking to find myself tearing madly with bleeding fingers at the bark of a giant live-oak from whose branches a screech-owl was sending forth his weird, piercing call. Bill Redd, his features distorted by that wink of more than mortal sagacity, was another frequent vision. I saw him often, cutting queer antics in the glades before me, brandishing a bottle as big as a beer-keg and bawling his ribald songs. I thought the bottle was tied around his neck as he went overboard from the smack, and then came another momentary gleam of consciousness which revealed me to myself tugging energetically upward upon a creeper under the delusion that I had hold of the

loose end of the rope and was trying to bring my unfortunate companion to the surface. I was up to my knees in the mud and water of a dismal swamp with no dry land in sight.

How I extricated myself from that dreadful place I do not know. I rested a moment against the sloping trunk of a cypress, then started again; but had not splashed a hundred weary paces on my aimless way till the bellowing of alligators and the croaking of frogs became the thunder of artillery and the rattle of musketry, and I was leading a desperate charge through a wooded valley where we waded in our own blood. Always I was possessed with the thought that to pause meant death; and thus even during most of my unconscious moments I must have continued on the move. Never did I come to my senses to find myself seated or lying down. How my fever-stricken, worn-out body sustained the strain is a mystery. I remember taking no nourishment; but afterwards it was found that all the meat had been gnawed from the ham-bone, and I must have done that while I fancied I was enjoying a splendid dinner at the great hotel in Tampa — enjoying it till I discovered that Effie had sprinkled arsenic upon my steak under the pretext that it was salt.

I beheld a new face, bearded, unknown. The

owner was seated in deep thought, his back against a tree, and a rifle at his feet. I knew at once he was one of the enemy's sentinels and I resolved to secure his gun and bind him before he could give the alarm. But unfortunately, as I stealthily approached, the snapping of a twig betrayed my presence and the man caught up his weapon and leaped to his feet. The expression of mute astonishment upon his features was so comical that I forgot my hostile intentions and laughed till I fell to the ground from exhaustion. Then I felt an iron grip upon my arm and I knew that the tables had been turned. I struggled and fought, but the giant who held me dragged me on, all the time pouring out hypocritical assurances that he meant me no harm. Then came a blank.

Again the bearded face bending over me, as I lay helpless upon the ground, and by it the faces of two women, one young and beautiful, the other not old, but thin and pale with large, haunting eyes. I saw them only for an instant; for I was back in the swamps astride a monstrous, slimy alligator which presently carried me out of the labyrinth across an open lake on the shore of which a great multitude in many-coloured garments was assembled to meet me. The chief, a tall man with a red, stubby beard, wearing a long purple cloak and a green plume

stuck in his hat, advanced to the water with his hands extended in welcome; but just at that instant my treacherous mount dived for the bottom, carrying me down with him, and then, while I was struggling desperately to regain the surface, came another blank.

CHAPTER IV

A CAMP IN THE EVERGLADES

I LAY on a bed of pine boughs and Spanish moss, staring around the interior of a palmetto shack and wondering how I came there. Upon her knees in the far corner of the hut was the elder of the two women whose faces I had seen often in my dreams. Inside the open satchel on the ground before her she held a folded newspaper which she was perusing surreptitiously, dropping it and half closing the satchel at the least sound that came through the door. I coughed to attract her attention; she leaped up with a startled cry, shutting the satchel with a snap and holding it behind her.

"I beg your pardon," I said faintly; "I did not mean to frighten you."

"You are better?" she asked, putting down the grip, where it was concealed by a blanket spread over a second pallet in the room, and coming toward me.

"Yes," I answered; "will you tell me where I am and how I came here?"

After a moment's hesitation the woman went to the door and called:

"Muriel!"

She was joined almost immediately by her younger companion and after a brief, whispered conversation at the door, they entered and approached my bed. The elder woman counted my pulse and placed her hand lightly upon my forehead. "The fever has gone," she said; "but to talk or even to hear others talk might excite you and bring it back."

I shook my head and smiled. "The worry caused by the unanswered questions I am asking myself will be more likely to accomplish that," I replied. "I am a physician and speak with authority. To whom do I owe my life?"

"Tell him, Mrs. Carrington," urged the girl addressed as Muriel, in a voice that was full of low music.

"Very well, dear," answered her companion, gently. Then turning to me: "My husband found you wandering delirious in the hummock. He brought you here and he, Miss Hampton, and I have done what our limited knowledge and the means at our disposal allowed."

"I thank you," I said earnestly; "I thank you sincerely."

I told them my name and, in as few words as possible, my story, omitting, of course, mention of the events in Tampa just preceding my departure in the smack. They listened with deep interest, particularly to that part of my recital that dealt with my wanderings through the woods and swamps.

"It doesn't seem possible you could reach this place, and out of your head most of the time too," declared Muriel wonderingly, when I had concluded. She glanced at her companion who assented with a nod.

"In what part of the State am I?" I asked a little anxiously.

"On an island in the Everglades," was Muriel's astonishing reply. Observing my surprise, she added: "You will think it even more remarkable, Mr. Lindsay, when I tell you the place is almost inaccessible owing to extensive and dangerous swamps that surround it. So far as known it has never before been reached except by a single passage from the east familiar only to my father and brother. We are hourly expecting my father back from —"

"Muriel, dear, I hear Brutus barking," broke in Mrs. Carrington suddenly flurried; "will you see whether Cushman is returning from his hunt?"

"Certainly," answered Muriel in some surprise. She started to leave the hut, but was met at the door by a tall, powerful, smooth-shaven man who carried a gun on his shoulder and several wild ducks in one hand. Merely nodding to him, a little coldly, I thought, the girl turned back remarking: "Here he is now, Mrs. Carrington."

"Our patient is quite rational now, Cushman. Mr. Lindsay, this is my husband, Mr. Carrington."

"I thank you for my life," I said, as he advanced smiling to the side of my couch after quickly leaning the gun against the wall of the hut and tossing the ducks beside it.

"My services aren't worth mentioning," he protested, cordially pressing the hand I extended. "Glad to see you so much improved. You've come around sooner than I expected. Let me see — this is only the fourth day since I found you wandering on the borders of the swamp."

I was bewildered. "You are not the man I surprised sitting at the base of the tree?" I asked, doubtfully.

"You remember that?" He was regarding me with keen interest.

"Yes, but it seems to me the face of that man was bearded."

"With what queer fancies the fever sometimes

deceives us!" ejaculated Mrs. Carrington with a nervous little laugh.

"But not in this case," asserted Muriel. "Surely you remember Mr. Carrington wore his beard and moustache then. It was directly after he rescued Mr. Lindsay that he shaved them off."

"Was it?" said the elder woman in a tone of one reluctant to be convinced. "Odd that I had forgotten."

"Indeed you had, Alice," her husband assured her pleasantly. "But it is astonishing that in his condition Mr. Lindsay took note of my appearance. Perhaps," laughing heartily, "perhaps you can also recall my amazement at our meeting."

"No doubt I was a startling apparition," I answered, echoing his mirth.

After Muriel and Mrs. Carrington had left us I told him such parts of my story as I had related to them. He heard it with the same attention and wonder, and, like the women, was most interested in the question of how I reached the island.

"And you could not retrace your course?" he asked, when I had ended my recital.

"Not the first step of it," was my emphatic response.

He seemed thoughtful. Then looking up with a smile, he continued:

"Yet who knows? Perhaps some object seen where you left the swamp might prove the first link in a chain of memories that would lead you step by step till it conducted you all the way out. Simply to satisfy the curiosity which I know you must share, we will, as soon as you are able, visit the locality where you surprised me and learn whether you can find anything familiar in the landscape."

"That will be to-morrow," said I, throwing back the blanket and sitting up on the edge of my couch.

My head swam with weakness and only a great exertion of will-power enabled me to retain my position.

Carrington regarded me with surprise. "I admire your pluck but you should be cautious," he said.

"If you will lend me something to wear — for I think the garments in which I came here are hardly presentable, I will help you prepare those ducks for supper, and later, with even more pleasure, to dispose of them; for I assure you my appetite is magnificent."

Carrington laughed and without further protest turned toward a small leathern trunk in the far corner of the shack, while I rose and began to fumble at the buttons of my long, loose night-robe.

My new acquaintance was feeling in his pocket for the key, and I saw him stop, stare, and dart quickly forward at the discovery that the trunk was open. He took out the tray and dived into the contents of the lower part, becoming excited as he evidently failed to find what he sought. Abandoning the search there, he began to look around the interior of the shack, and presently his eye encountered the grip which was only partly concealed beneath the blanket where his wife had hastily placed it. Turning his back to me he apparently assured himself that whatever was inside of it had not been disturbed, after which he heaved a sigh of relief as he placed it within the trunk and calmly devoted himself to selecting suitable garments for my use. He brought them with a smile and a cheery word to where I had seated myself on a camp-stool. I do not think he had any idea of my having observed his agitation or noted his care in locking the trunk and putting the key in his pocket.

"Have you been long in your present quarters?" I asked him, as I dressed myself and he picked up the ducks preparatory to ridding them of their plumage.

"About a month," he answered. "My wife is in poor health and her physician in Nashville

recommended the outing. For the same reason my friend Hampton came, and brought his daughter to take care of him. We were to remain here three months, hunting, fishing, and living the primitive life you see. But I do not find my wife improved; perhaps we may return sooner — perhaps."

He lingered on the last word with an emphasis I did not understand, and I felt it would be impertinent to ask an explanation since he did not volunteer one. Instead I expressed regret that his wife had not benefited by the trip, and a little later fell to questioning him about the island and the sort of sport it afforded.

He declared it teeming with game of all kinds, while the several streams that ran through it, and the waters of a small lake in the southern end, were literally alive with fish.

"In fact," said Carrington, "Hampton and his son, who discovered it, kept the secret and hold it for a sort of private game preserve. A party of capitalists were anxious for a report upon the feasibility of draining some of the extensive swamps of this region. My friends, who were of the number, undertook personally to secure the necessary information, and it was on the expedition undertaken for that purpose that they accidentally stumbled upon this sportsman's paradise. It is

about six miles long and three miles across in the widest part. More than half of its surface is high, rolling hummock land, in parts so densely covered with vegetation peculiar to the clime as to be almost impenetrable. There is this belt of open pine wood in which we are camped, and in the extreme southern end a goodly stretch of prairie. Anything from a partridge to a panther finds suitable cover."

As an ardent sportsman, I listened with enthusiasm. But I knew the delights which the place afforded were not for me. I must seize the earliest moment for communicating with those in doubt as to what had befallen me. I decided to say nothing that night, but, if in the morning I should feel able to undertake the journey back to civilization, I would ask Carrington's aid in doing so, impressing upon him the urgent necessity that forced me, however reluctantly, to increase my already heavy obligations to him.

He had laughingly refused my offer of assistance in preparing the evening meal and I sat on the ground with my back against a pine tree, sniffing with the zest of a starving man the delicious odour that came from the ducks in the baking-skillet, when Carrington now and then lifted the cover. There was gravy made from broth resulting from

a previous boiling, and a skilletful of delightful biscuit. The women congratulated me upon my speedy recovery, and presently in the glow of the sunset we sat down upon the white sand to a simple meal which surpassed, in my opinion, any elaborate banquet it was ever my lot to attend.

Carrington was a delightful companion. He chatted unceasingly upon a great variety of subjects, giving evidence that he was a shrewd observer, a thorough man of the world, and possessed of a goodly share of wit.

Neither of the women took much part in the conversation. Muriel Hampton seemed preoccupied, and when now and then she joined in the talk it was with obvious effort.

Mrs. Carrington was even more reserved. Her nervousness was pitiable. She writhed and twisted her body and arms almost continually, distorted her features into grotesque grimaces, reached out and touched objects near her, as if obeying an irresistible impulse, and often started violently and looked behind her. Her companions, accustomed to these demonstrations, pretended not to observe them; but I noticed that her husband, even while actively exercising his remarkable powers to entertain, never ceased to keep a solicitous and affectionate watch upon her, occasionally, and in a

manner not to attract attention, allowing his hand to rest for a moment upon her arm with a reassuring pressure that had an instantaneous and wonderfully soothing effect. At such times she looked into his face with a devotion that was touching in its completeness. There was something too of protection in her attitude toward him, and, as I thought, of defiance to the outside world.

More than once I detected her eye fixed upon me with an expression of dislike and suspicion; but I considered that due to the natural reluctance of a proud, sensitive person compelled to exhibit to a stranger an affliction which could but excite his curiosity and compassion.

At the close of the meal occurred an incident that afforded melancholy proof of Mrs. Carrington's distressing condition. Miss Hampton had not spoken for some time and seemed to have grown more pensive. Unexpectedly, however, she interrupted an anecdote Carrington was telling to ask whether her father had confided to him the nature of the business that had called him back to Miami.

I could see Carrington was surprised and a trifle disconcerted by the question, while his wife looked quickly up at him with a glance plainly apprehensive. After a moment's hesitation he replied that his friend had merely told him that he had for-

gotten before they entered the swamps to attend to a matter of great importance, which would demand his instant return. He had given no hint of what it was, but had added that it might detain him in Miami indefinitely, as it required him to communicate at length with persons at a distance and wait to receive their answers.

"I don't understand it," said the girl as if speaking to herself. "I think he should have come back and told me."

Carrington smiled indulgently.

"My dear Muriel, have I not explained that he would have lost twenty-four hours by so doing? We were at the opposite end of the island where the trail leads off through the swamps. By leaving at once from that point your father could reach the solid land and perhaps the settlements that night. Had he returned to camp he must have postponed his start till the following morning, because otherwise night certainly would have overtaken him in the swamps. Time was precious. He asked me to make this explanation to you, to tell you not to worry over his absence and to assure you he would return at the earliest moment. Really, there is no cause for your anxiety."

Muriel sighed.

"Two weeks is a long time," she said. "No

doubt it is foolish of me, but I cannot rid my mind of the idea that something dreadful has happened. Last night I had the most horrible dream! I thought I stood in a clearing in the hummock and saw great numbers of buzzards circling over a spot in the edge of the swamp. Moved by curiosity I drew near, and there on his back in the shallow water, his white face and staring eyes turned to the sky, I saw — I saw —"

She shuddered, choked and turned away.

I was unprepared for what followed. We had risen and as the girl spoke, I noticed that Mrs. Carrington, with a strange blending of fear and sympathy in her countenance, had drawn near to her. There was a momentary silence broken by a stifled sob from Muriel. Instantly it was echoed by a shrill cry from the elder woman, who suddenly flung her arms around her friend and gave way to an outburst the violence of which I had never seen equalled. The paroxysm appeared to deprive her of all bodily strength; for she slipped from the answering embrace in which the girl had clasped her and sank down till she lay in a heap at her feet, clutching and burying her face in Muriel's skirt, while she continued to utter the most terrifying shrieks. It seemed that the picture suggested by the younger woman's words appealed to the disordered imagi-

nation of the poor invalid with all the force of reality, and that she was expressing her emotions of horror and sympathy for her friend as if the grisly spectacle were actually before her.

Carrington and Muriel were trying to quiet and reassure her, and I hastened to advise and also to assist in carrying out, as far as my own weakness would permit, such measures as my professional knowledge suggested. At last she became calmer; and her husband and friend led her between them to the shack which the two women had occupied together, as I understood later, ever since my unexpected arrival. As they approached this, Mrs. Carrington continued to weep with her arm around Muriel's neck, every now and then turning to caress her husband as if to assure him that she understood and was grateful for his concern on her account, while she mutely besought him to bear with the grief and pity for her friend that she could not avoid showing.

It had been dark more than an hour when Carrington rejoined me at the door of his shack. I had just made my way there after washing the dishes in the little stream at the foot of the hill — a slow and laborious task in my enfeebled condition. Mrs. Carrington was much better, her husband told me — she was sleeping under the influence of an opiate

he had given her. I protested against occupying her place in the shack, insisting I could sleep in the provision tent; but Carrington would not hear to it. The shacks were not a dozen yards apart, he said, and should he be needed, which he did not anticipate — nor indeed did I — Muriel could easily call him. Yielding to his wishes, therefore, I removed my clothes and lay down on the couch which I had formerly occupied, though with an unspoken resolve not to usurp it another night.

So deeply impressed was I with the scene I had witnessed that, in spite of my weakness and fatigue, I did not fall asleep until the night was far spent.

CHAPTER V.

MY DEPARTURE IS POSTPONED

WHEN I was aroused by Carrington, the sun was an hour high. He and the ladies had breakfasted, and Mrs. Carrington was able to accompany Muriel a short distance up the little stream that flowed near the camp, whither they were now gone, to try their luck with rod and line. I thanked my host warmly for his thoughtfulness and care, as I sat down to the flapjacks, fried squirrel, and coffee he had prepared for me. After eating I felt much stronger and decided to leave the island that day. I was about to apprise Carrington of my purpose and to seek his assistance, when he asked me whether I was equal to a two mile walk through the hummock.

"To a longer walk than that," I answered, "since I must make my start back to civilization to-day."

"I am thinking you will change your mind about that," he said, regarding me fixedly and with an odd expression.

I assured him to the contrary. One of my friends,

I told him, had seen me start in the smack and, no word from me having been received, it would be surmised I had gone down in the storm. I must correct such an impression at once, not only to relieve anxiety and grief on my account, but to prevent any action my family or business associates might take as a result of their accepting the story of my death. Above all my wife must know. Would Mr. Carrington lend me the clothes I wore and give me directions as to the trail? I was reluctant, I said, to impose any further upon his kindness; but he must appreciate my predicament and how grateful I would be for aid which, indeed, was indispensable.

That peculiar look remained upon Carrington's features all the time I was talking. When I ceased, however, he smiled pleasantly and assured me cordially he would be glad to help me all he could, suggesting that we further discuss my intended departure after we had taken the walk he had proposed.

"Pardon me," I said; "but I am very anxious not to lose a moment's time." I was puzzled; I thought I had made him understand the urgency of the case.

"This little trip will not delay and may be the means of speeding your departure," he explained.

"Then I suppose it will take us in the direction I am to travel on my longer journey," I said, "and I am ready to start with you as soon as I have told the ladies good-by, and thanked them for their care of me."

"Certainly you shall have that opportunity," he assured me; "wait a moment, please."

We had been conversing at the door of the shack and he now disappeared inside, returning almost immediately with a shotgun in each hand, and remarking that we might see game on our walk. I took one of the guns and also some shells, which he told me were loaded with buckshot, and we started through the open stretch between the pines and the hummock. I noted with surprise that we were not going in the direction which Carrington had pointed out as that taken by Muriel and his wife on their fishing excursion; but I made no comment.

It was soon evident my companion had not spoken amiss in describing the abundance of game. We had not gone more than a few hundred yards when we put up two covies of quail, and, as we approached the hummock, I could see many squirrels leaping about in the tree-tops. But our guns were loaded for deer and we did not disturb either birds or squirrels. After we had broken through the tangled growth on the border of the hummock, we

found the interior comparatively open until we began to descend a long slope which terminated, so Carrington told me, in the swamps that surrounded the island.

At this point I noticed my companion began to observe me closely. He slackened his pace, coming frequently to a stand and looking around him, after which he would direct covert glances at me before slowly moving on. At first I thought he was merely on the watch for game; but his scrutiny of me soon became too apparent to misunderstand. I tried not to heed it; but it mystified and annoyed me. Presently he stopped and placed his hand upon the trunk of a large magnolia.

"This is the tree," he said.

"The tree?" I echoed, regarding him with surprise.

"Yes," he said, smiling; "the tree under which I was sitting when you surprised me."

"Oh!" I ejaculated, and looked around me with some interest.

"Do you see anything familiar?" he questioned eagerly.

"Nothing," I answered.

His countenance fell. "I have brought you along the edge of the swamp in the direction you must have come. Your clothes were dripping when I

first saw you; therefore you could not have been long out of the water. We must have passed the place where you left the cypress, and you have not recognized it."

"No," I said, wondering at the keen disappointment in his tones, "I never supposed I could."

"Yet, if you were to go over the ground trying your best, the result might be different," he insisted. "Suppose we return and make the experiment?"

"For what?" I asked, a little impatiently. I thought it strange he should insist upon gratifying this whim when I had been at pains to tell him my reasons for haste.

"To oblige me," he answered with a smile; "I ask it as a favour."

"Then I shall be glad to do as you request," was my assurance; and accordingly we began to retrace our steps.

But it was to no purpose, as I had foreseen; I could discover nothing that gave me a clue to my course through the cypress.

I was astonished at Carrington's chagrin, which he now made no attempt to conceal. He muttered a deep oath or two, looked hopelessly about him and finally threw himself down in an attitude of despair upon the trunk of a fallen tree.

I stared in silent amazement.

At last he looked up smiling in his usual manner.

"You must pardon this exhibition," he said; "I know you will, when you understand its cause. It is useless to conceal that any longer: We are prisoners upon this island."

"Prisoners?" I repeated, staring harder than ever. I wondered whether he knew what he was saying.

"Yes," he answered gloomily, "and prisoners for a long time, I fear."

"Will you explain yourself?" I asked after a moment's silence.

"Certainly. You and I came to this place by different routes — you by a route that was not known to exist. Neither can remember the way he came, and as a consequence we must remain until somebody comes and shows us the way out."

"But that will be soon. Your friend, Hampton, will return in a few days at most?" I was a little annoyed at the delay, but not seriously apprehensive.

"That is doubtful," he said, dropping his eyes and tapping nervously on the log; "it is very doubtful."

"You mean that you share his daughter's fears?"

"Yes; though, as you have seen, I conceal that fact from her, hoping they may prove groundless. But the time is long past when he should have

returned. My wife and I have talked this over — we fear the worst."

"In that case, God pity the girl!" I said with a vivid remembrance of the scene of the preceding evening, and Muriel's dream.

"Yes, God pity her!" murmured Carrington without looking up. He sighed. "Poor Alice! she is completely unnerved by this, as you saw. She loves Muriel as a daughter."

"That is evident," I asserted. "But why despair of again seeing Hampton? Did he not say his business might detain him indefinitely in Miami?"

"He did; but I am sure he did not anticipate an absence of more than a few days. My fear is that he has strayed from the course and perished in the swamps."

"As one of the discoverers of the trail and one who had passed over it often, I should think he would be familiar with its intricacies."

Carrington hesitated.

"Ordinarily he would," he at last admitted. Then with an appearance of great reluctance: "But suppose my friend was given to conviviality and had left Miami and entered the Everglades in a condition that impaired the intelligent use of his faculties? Unusual occurrences sometimes befall a man who starts upon a journey in such a state."

"They do indeed!" I agreed, with a sudden memory of Bill Redd.

"In this case the man's fate could be predicted to a certainty," declared Carrington; "and it would be that which I believe my friend has met. In my opinion we are doomed to remain here until poor Joe's continued absence creates uneasiness at his home, when his son, Dudley, will come to investigate. Two months must pass before that happens; for we were not to return till May. Dudley's fears may not be aroused until much later; for he may think we merely have decided to prolong our stay. Poor Alice! poor Alice!" He rose abruptly, turned away and affected to be busy with examining the shells in his gun.

I was sorry for him and felt his apprehensions on his wife's account were too well founded, though I did not believe for an instant we would be forced to remain on the island.

"Mr. Carrington, I intend to leave this place at once," I said confidently; "and I invite you, your wife and Miss Hampton to accompany me."

"And how do you expect to go?" he demanded, regarding me with surprise.

"That is a matter I shall decide later; but I am going."

He smiled and shook his head incredulously.

"My dear Mr. Lindsay, this island is surrounded by dense cypress swamps that extend many miles out from its borders. Beyond is a wide expanse of open, deep water; then another great stretch of cypress and marsh. At only one point do the forests approach as near to each other as a mile, and there the intervening water is shallow enough to ford on horseback. That is how we got here. You must have come by a different way, stumbling upon some point where the outlying forests meet to the west. But, as you admit, you cannot retrace your course; and no more can I retrace mine. All I know is that we entered the island somewhere near its southern end."

"Very well, I will strike off through the swamp in that vicinity, reach the outer circumference of the cypress and ride along it till I discover the shallow channel. Then I will return and we can all leave together."

"It will never do," protested Carrington; "the swamp is absolutely impenetrable in places. You will become entangled and never find your way out — perhaps be sucked up by the quagmires. And besides, you will never find the channel. I have tried a dozen times and been forced to give it up."

"Nevertheless, if you will lend me a horse, I intend to make the attempt," I persisted.

It was arranged at last that I start the following morning.

In spite of the objections he had offered, Carrington evidently was gratified at my undertaking the expedition. He proposed going with me, but I told him that I understood something of the perils of my journey, which he was fortunate to escape in his former efforts and which he must not encounter again for fear of leaving the ladies without a protector. It was therefore settled that he was to accompany me only to the southern part of the island where he was to point out as nearly as he could, the point at which his party made their entrance. We agreed to say nothing to the women about the probability of their leaving the place unless I was successful in finding the outlet; that would be soon enough, Carrington said, and would not arouse in his wife hopes that might be doomed to disappointment, while it would postpone for Muriel the knowledge that he shared her misgivings about her father.

I asked Carrington whether he had given up all hope that Hampton was alive. After a moment's hesitation he replied that he had. I suggested that it might be the proper thing to be frank with Miss

Hampton; but I could see that he shrank from the idea and I did not feel that I had the right to urge him.

That night I slept on a pallet in the provision tent and Mrs. Carrington resumed her place in the shack. Before retiring I happened to think of some trifling detail of the arrangements for my expedition that, unless adjusted that night, would considerably delay our start in the morning. I accordingly hastened through the night toward Carrington's hut to settle the matter before he had gone to bed. As I approached, I heard the voices of my friend and his wife in low, earnest conversation. Apparently she was expressing doubt about something and he was trying to reassure her.

"Safe? Of course it will be safe, my dear," I heard Carrington say. "It would have been safe to go directly to our final destination in the first place. I was a fool to come here!"

"Oh!" she wailed, "if you had never come, that horrible —"

"Hush, hush, you must not think of that!" he urged gently, and I heard the sound of a kiss, as if he were silencing her by that loving means. "Besides, we are going away soon, as I told you, if only Lindsay can find the passage. If he does not —"

He stopped abruptly, becoming aware of my

presence, of which, indeed, I had sought to apprise them before, failing because they were deeply absorbed. Mrs. Carrington saw me at the same time, and, uttering a little cry, clung to her husband.

"Don't get excited," he said soothingly; "it's only Mr. Lindsay." Then turning to me with a laugh: "You have caught me in a bit of treachery, Lindsay, as you heard, I have told my wife. But I must plead guilty once and for all of being utterly unable to keep a secret from her, or, indeed, to deny her anything." He stroked her hair fondly.

"Oh, Cushman! if it were not for that —"

"Alice! Alice!" he urged in gentle warning.

She hid her face upon his bosom and began to sob.

"My little girl is nervous again to-night," he said, bending over and caressing her in a manner that made my heart warm toward him. "Won't you try, Alice, won't you try to control yourself — for *my* sake?"

"For your sake? Oh, Cushman! for you I could do anything!" And indeed she did leave off her weeping and become calm at once, though what an effort it cost her I plainly saw. But the kiss he gave her seemed ample reward, and with a look and gesture of unspeakable devotion she left him

and entered the shack by the door of which we stood.

I fear there was bitterness in my heart as I made my way back to my pallet in the provision tent. Why could I not have a wife to love me thus? I had been ready at first to bestow such love, but what, alas! had I got in return! And now I was straining every nerve to get back to it. Better perish in the swamps!

Oh, the emptiness of life without woman's love! I had at home, wealth, position, friends — much that makes a man most envied among his fellows; but I felt my life had been lived in vain, for into it had not entered that inestimable blessing which doubles, yea quadruples the value of all other blessings given with it, yet is of itself sufficient to satisfy without them. Were this mine, as plainly it was Carrington's, I felt it would have made for me a paradise even of this lonely island, where I would be happy to live and die, seeing but one face, hearing but one voice; but that face the face which would have filled my field of vision where men and women congregate thickest, and that voice the voice for which alone and anywhere I had ears. But that face I had not seen and that voice I had never heard.

CHAPTER VI

I SETTLE TWO QUESTIONS

BESIDES the horses they rode the campers had brought three others to transport the necessaries for their three months' sojourn in the wilds, the nature of the trail rendering the use of a wagon impossible. The animals were suffered to run loose, and, as the little brook afforded water and the stretch of prairie adjoining the pines in which the camp was pitched provided excellent pasturage, they were not tempted to stray. All of them, therefore, were at hand; except of course the one which Hampton had ridden back to Miami, and, as there appeared little room for choice, I took the one easiest caught, it proving to be a pack-horse. The only available saddle was Carrington's, which he insisted I should use. For himself he strapped a heavy blanket upon the back of his mount with a surcingle.

We left camp a little after sunrise, and about three hours later arrived in the locality where, as nearly as my companion could remember, he first

set foot upon the island. Here, after many expressions of good wishes for the success of my enterprise he left me and rode back to camp.

Before entering the swamp I sat a moment upon my horse looking after his receding figure. He rode with grace of an accomplished horseman, not seeming to miss the convenience of stirrups. I have never seen a finer specimen of physical manhood than Carrington. He was over six feet in height and weighed, he told me, more than two-hundred pounds, nearly all of which was plainly muscle and bone. I am by no means puny myself, as my record in college athletics shows; but I lacked three inches of being as tall as Carrington, and his clothes hung loosely upon me. Some of the feats of strength I saw him perform while on the island were astonishing. He was in the very prime of life — I should say, about forty. As my eyes followed him, he reached the crest of the hill, turned to wave a final good-bye and a moment later disappeared down the opposite descent. I urged my reluctant horse into the water and began my long search.

To those unacquainted with the character of the country, the plan by which I proposed to find the outlet would seem easy of execution. I knew better from the first; but I confess I had no real conception

of the difficulties until I actually began the struggle to overcome them.

The island was in the extreme southern end of the Everglades where the vegetation is most tropical. Throughout the extensive swamps surrounding it, land frequently rose above the surface of the water, and in almost every instance was covered with a matted growth of such luxuriousness as baffled my every attempt to penetrate it. Consequently, long détours were necessary; and these, owing to the frequent change of direction on account of the irregular shape and broken character of the land areas, were so bewildering as to completely put me at fault in my notion of the course I was pursuing. Several times I fancied I was approaching the outer border of the cypress, when to my intense mortification, I found myself emerging again upon the shore of the island. Even in most parts of the water my path was beset by a thousand entangling creepers and shrubs. In some of the places where it was shallow and the ground which was visible beneath it was almost bare, the mud presented a new menace. Once or twice, before I learned to shun these spots, my horse mired down in them, and it was with difficulty I extricated him. But the quagmires were not always to be avoided, as sometimes they lay con-

cealed beneath the tall weeds and the water hyacinths.

In the four days of my fruitless search I never saw the open water which Carrington said was beyond the outer circumference of the cypress. I had told him not to expect me at the camp until I had found the outlet or given up all hope; so each night I made my way back to the island and camped upon its shore. My gun provided me with an abundance to eat, but it could not perform that service for my horse. To prevent his wandering off in the hummock or going back to camp I was forced to tether him, and, as there was scarcely any grass in that part of the island, he got little nourishment. On the third night he was so weak from starvation and continued struggling in the mud and brush that plainly he could endure no more. I started to ride him to camp to exchange for a new mount, but he was so near a collapse that I decided to allow him a night's rest, especially as I had found a more promising place in which to stake him.

I was very near to giving up in despair. My skin was scratched and torn by the thorns and nettles and my face was smarting from the sting of insects. In spite of precautions in keeping my system fortified with the quinine and whiskey Carrington had given me, I felt the dread scourge of the swamps

was again getting a hold upon me. Although Carrington had told me that the distance from the island to the point on the outer margin of the cypress where the channel began, allowing for all the windings necessary to make one's way through the swamp, could not be more than five miles, I fancied that more than once I had been that distance straight out from the shore and without sighting the open water. Therefore, I thought he might be mistaken in supposing that the trail left the island in the locality he designated. It might be farther north, and before I went to sleep I decided I would return to camp next morning, get a fresh horse, consult with Carrington and, if he acknowledged the possibility of a mistake, come back and renew my investigations in a new quarter.

But when day came my horse appeared so much revived by his rest and improved forage that I foolishly supposed him capable of undergoing another day of severe exertion. I could not bear to return without something favourable to report, so I rode a mile and a half northward and again turned into the swamp at a place where obstructions seemed least formidable.

For an hour my progress was better than on any previous day; then I began to encounter the usual difficulties. I soon had cause to regret that

I had not provided myself with another horse. The poor animal I bestrode began to stagger and now and then to stop with his head to the ground and his sides trembling and heaving tempestuously as he struggled for his failing breath. I gave him his head, trusting to his instinct to enable him to make his way back to land by the shortest route, as I had done before with happy results; but though he started at a better pace, he soon fagged. At last I leaped off in the mud and water, and then, relieved of my weight, he managed to move on a little faster.

My nostrils had long become accustomed to the sickening odours from the stagnant water and decaying vegetation, but they were presently saluted by a stench even more disgusting. It was the unmistakable scent of carrion borne to me by a stiff breeze blowing on my right, which also carried the sound of a mighty cawing among the crows. Evidently some wild animal — a deer, a panther, a bear, perhaps — had met his death in the jungle and the winged scavengers were now assembled to their revolting feast. That was my first thought; but even in the act of jerking upon the rein by which I led my horse to hurry him beyond the smell, I paused while my heart stood still at the sudden remembrance of Muriel's dream. Could it

be that I was to prove that dreadful vision prophetic!

Leading my horse a part of the way and presently leaving him tied to a limb, I got to windward by circling far around, and approached the spot where I saw the crows and buzzards flying among the trees. They redoubled their noise and movement as I drew near, almost deafening me with their harsh calls and filling the air with whirling, black pinions. The ground from which they rose was an islet covered with gallberry bushes through which I slowly forced a tortuous passage till I came suddenly upon a clear space, in the midst of which lay the rotting carcass of a horse. The animal had evidently been dead a long time; for the inroads of the vultures had left little besides his bones. But what at once arrested my attention, causing my heart to throb with pity for the poor girl at the camp, was a filthy, bedraggled saddle clinging by its girth to the backbone of the carcass.

I never doubted the horse was that ridden by Hampton to Miami, and the presence of his bones in the swamp plainly indicated to me the fate of Carrington's friend.

Many hoof-prints, though half-obliterated by the hopping about of the heavy birds, appeared in the moist earth; but I searched in vain for the

imprint of a human foot. Apparently Hampton had perished first, his horse roaming on through the swamps till he fell from exhaustion to die near the shore of the island.

Conquering my disgust, I closely examined the saddle and then the carcass. I was most particular in observing the head, which had suffered least from the vultures and to which the bridle remained attached. I became very much absorbed, scraping away with a long stick the decaying flesh and skin from a part of the skull. Then I rose quickly, made another thorough but fruitless search for human foot-prints, returned to my horse and led him back to the island. The distance was not more than a quarter of a mile, but we were an hour in covering it. As soon as we reached the solid earth I mounted him, but had scarcely touched the saddle when he fell, spraining my ankle, which was caught under him. I managed to work myself free and also to get the saddle and bridle off him, burdened with which I limped painfully toward camp.

I believed I had settled two important questions: Hampton would never return, and we seemed doomed to remain on the island till his son came and took us off.

True, I might resume my investigations with

other horses. but, if I prosecuted them with the necessary vigour, I should risk the loss of them too, and might in the end deprive us of the means for leaving the island even if I succeeded in finding the trail. Moreover, granting the possibility of my stumbling on the entrance to the channel, I could never remember the bewildering course by which I came, and hence could not hope to guide my friends out. Thus with a heavy heart I acknowledged the answers to both questions to be equally conclusive and unsatisfactory.

It was two in the afternoon when I sighted camp. Carrington saw me as I reached the edge of the timber, and, putting down the gun he was cleaning hastened toward me. I sat down and waited, glad of this opportunity of first discussing my news alone with him.

"You have failed, I see, Lindsay," he said with an evident attempt to make the most of the matter. "Don't take it to heart; I never permitted myself to expect any other result."

"You are minus a horse," I began, "and —"

"That is nothing," he broke in, taking my hand and pressing it warmly. "The main point is you have returned safe; believe me, I rejoice at that."

"I have news of your friend," I said, slowly.

"What?"

He dropped my hand, regarding me breathlessly.

"Did he not ride a sorrel horse with a tan saddle and bridle and a red saddle blanket?" I asked.

"You found such a horse — in the swamp?" He was pale and his breath was coming quickly.

"His carcass, yes," I answered.

Carrington's limbs seemed to give away. He turned half around and sat down on a pine stump by which he had been standing, burying his face in his hands and resting his elbows on his knees. His body was quivering.

"Do you hear me, Mr. Carrington?"

For answer he nodded.

"Beyond what I have told you I found no trace of your friend. There were none of his foot-prints in the mud. From that circumstance would you not think he perished sooner than his horse, which then succeeded in making his way a little nearer to the island,"

"Yes," he answered readily, "I should take that view of it."

I approached and laid my hand upon his shoulder. "You must tell his daughter," I said, gently.

"No, no, no! — I can't!" he exclaimed in startled, vehement protest.

"And yet, you must — you or your wife," I insisted. "You are her friends and it is fitting you

break this news to her. Afterward I will tell her all I know."

He sat obviously struggling to overcome his reluctance. "You are right," he presently admitted; "and we must tell her at once." He rose. "Pardon my emotion, Mr. Lindsay; but I loved Joe like a brother, and even while I expected this, it has come as a shock. Now I must wring his poor child's heart with the fatal news; and then there is Alice — my poor Alice!"

We slowly approached the shacks. From the border of the timber I had seen the two women climb the hill from the brook and enter that belonging to Muriel. I told Carrington and added I would await his summons at the door of the other.

Perhaps half-an-hour passed before he emerged and silently beckoned me. I had heard for some time Mrs. Carrington's hysterical sobbing and her husband's low, sympathizing tones; but not one sound from Muriel. After Carrington had signalled me, he stepped again inside and in another instant I had joined him there.

I shall never forget the scene as I entered. Muriel, her beautiful features pale and trembling in spite of a heroic effort at self-control, sat on a camp-stool in the rear of the shack, while on her knees before her, her face hidden in the girl's lap was

Mrs. Carrington, whose spasmodic bursts of weeping were the only sounds audible. Her husband was bending over her, his hand upon her arm. He put his lips to her ear.

"Alice, dear Alice, be calm — for me," he murmured. "Muriel wants to talk of this with Mr. Lindsay. Come, Alice, we must go."

"Muriel! Muriel! I am so sorry! so sorry! so sorry!" she kept repeating between her sobs.

As Carrington gently raised his wife, Muriel caught her fragile form and kissed her tenderly. For a moment the girl seemed on the point of giving away to her emotions; but she mastered the inclination, let her hands fall into her lap and sat perfectly still while Carrington led his wife from the hut. Then, before I could express my deep compassion, and my admiration at the way she bore up, she addressed me in a low voice, asking that I repeat the story of my finding the horse. I did so, while she listened calmly, one hand lying idly in her lap, the other holding a crumpled, moist handkerchief to her eyes.

"And you saw nothing of — of *him* there?" she asked in a tremulous voice.

"Nothing," I answered brokenly.

"Thank you, Mr. Lindsay. To-morrow I may ask another favour of you."

"Miss Hampton, if there is anything in the world I can do for you —" I could get no further. Tears were streaming from my eyes.

Without looking up, she held out her hand, and after pressing it in silence I left the hut. As I passed out, I cast a last glance back and saw her throw her arms across a little table that stood by her side, and hide her face upon them. Her attitude expressed abandonment to grief; but there were no loud lamentations — scarcely an audible sob. It was a deep, strong, fond nature in sorrow; and the scene had about it something so sacred, that I felt guilty at having inadvertently witnessed it.

Avoiding the shack, where I heard the voices of Carrington and his wife, I limped slowly to the little stream and sat down in the shade of a liveoak on its banks. There I revolved in my mind the events of the day. One of my discoveries in connection with the horse, I had not told either to Muriel or to Carrington. In the centre of his forehead I had found a bullet-hole.

CHAPTER VII

MURIEL

NEXT morning I rode back to where I had left my horse, and, finding his condition hopeless, put him out of his misery. In the act of pulling the trigger of Carrington's Winchester I was struck by the possibility of Hampton's having performed a like act of mercy for his helpless mount; but later, when I had reflected, I saw that this was improbable. Even if the lack of signs of his presence on the islet could be accounted for by the theory that he shot the horse while standing in the water at a distance, the proximity of the spot to the shore of the island would seem to have insured his accomplishing the rest of his journey on foot, as I had done. For even if he had left Miami in the condition hinted at by Carrington, the effects of intoxicants must have worn off by that time and, indeed, could hardly have been overpowering at first in view of the fact that he had made his way successfully thus far. Clearly, that was not the explanation of the mysterious bullet-hole.

I had eaten a snack and got away before the others were out of bed, and it was only a little after nine o'clock when I rode back into camp. Carrington was seated on a stool watching the steam that rose from the spout of a kettle on the embers of the camp-fire. He looked up at my approach, and I saw his countenance was troubled.

"Miss Hampton wants to see you," he informed me.

I thanked him and asked about Mrs. Carrington.

The shadow on his brow deepened, and he shook his head mournfully. "Not so well this morning; she has not left her bed."

"I am very sorry. Perhaps I can be of service?"

He hesitated. "I thank you sincerely," he said at last; "but I think all she needs is perfect quiet. Yesterday's events were too much for her. She has told me you formerly practised medicine, and should it become necessary, I will be glad to accept your offer."

I assured him I would be always ready to respond to his call, and, leaving him preparing some dainty to tempt the invalid's appetite, I limped to Muriel's shack, leading my horse.

She saw me and emerged from the door equipped for the saddle. Her cheeks were pale, her eyes red

and swollen; but her manner was composed and exhibited a sweet, gentle dignity.

"Good morning, Mr. Lindsay. I think you told me you would grant my favour. I want you to take me where you found the horse."

I regarded her anxiously. "Are you sure, Miss Hampton, you can endure such a trip?"

"Don't try to dissuade me," she urged gently. "You do not understand. I say to you, as I did to Mr. Carrington, that I cannot rest till I have been there and searched for some trace of my father. Not that I doubt that your investigation was thorough," she added quickly; "but I can only be satisfied in seeing for myself."

I told her I appreciated her feelings and would not oppose her wishes.

"Thank you," she said, simply.

A moment later I had assisted her to the back of her horse, which Carrington had saddled and tied near the door, and we were off. As long as we remained among the pines, the way was open and we rode side by side. After a while Muriel spoke:

"You did not find the passage from the island?"

I told her of my unsuccessful explorations.

"I am sorry," she sighed, "I am very sorry; but we must content ourselves. When we do not return at the appointed time, Dudley will understand some-

thing is wrong and come to investigate. Poor fellow! what a shock it will be!"

"Not greater than to you, nor can he endure it with more fortitude," I could not help saying.

She bowed her head without replying and we rode for several moments in silence. Again she was the first to speak.

"I wish you could have known father."

I echoed the wish, adding that, from remarks Mr. Carrington had dropped, I was convinced of his having been a most lovable character.

Just the shadow of a frown crossed the girl's countenance.

"Mr. Carrington and father were not intimate till a few weeks before we came here," she said.

We now entered the hummock, where conversation was out of the question, because most of the time I was in the lead forcing a passage through the tangled growth.

No words can express my admiration for Muriel's bearing during the trying hours that followed. She plainly had nerved herself to meet the most horrid possibilities, and prosecuted the search with calm determination. I succeeded in preventing a minute examination of the horse's carcass — she was content with indentifying the saddle, and confined her further investigations there to the islet

itself. I assisted her, of course; but we found no trace of the missing man.

We beat about the swamp in every direction with the same result. The bushes we closely scrutinized for a chance strip of clothing, and we sought the same sort of token in the limbs of the trees, where it might have been carried by the vultures; but without success. Our quest extended several miles out from the island, and the afternoon was far spent before Muriel was satisfied to abandon it as hopeless.

Nothing but the girl's indomitable resolution enabled her to sit in the saddle. We had scarcely paused since leaving camp, and the constant struggling among vines and bushes and in the water and mud was almost as wearing on rider as on horse. Muriel could not have slept much the night before, she had eaten no breakfast, and we had brought nothing on our trip with which to refresh and strengthen ourselves. The fight to repress her natural grief was enough of itself to cause physical exhaustion.

When we reached the island, I begged her to dismount and rest before we returned to camp. She consented, and, after helping her from the saddle, I led the horses away and hitched them. When I returned, Muriel was seated on the ground beneath a magnolia weeping silently.

I stood embarrassed. It seemed silly to utter the commonplaces of condolence to a girl like this But I wanted her to appreciate my sympathy and admiration. I ventured a few words; but I think my manner better revealed what was in my heart. Her tears continued; then resolutely drying her eyes, she raised them to mine.

"I see you understand my battle," she said with a piteous smile.

"You are the bravest woman I ever knew!" I burst out.

She shook her head in mournful denial.

"That cannot be, when, if I dare speak of — of — him —"

She struggled heroically to keep back her sobs, but the limit had been passed. "Oh!" she wailed, "to think of him in that frightful place with those hideous birds — oh, my father! my poor, dear father!"

Covering her face with her hands, she gave way at last.

I attempted no consolation, thinking it best to let her sorrow exhaust itself without interruption. When she looked up again there was a touching apology in her countenance.

"He was everything to me, you know," she explained. "Since Dudley married and moved to

Detroit, we were alone in the old house except for the servants. After he lost his health I seldom let him get out of my sight. You do not know what joy I felt in adding to his comforts and brightening his life. Sometimes he would take me in his arms and say he could not do without me — and then I was happiest! What will home be without him! I do not want to go back! I do not want to go back!"

My heart bled for her; but I could think of nothing to say, and sat silent with bowed head. She resumed:

"No doubt you think that, as I am young, much will happen in my life to make me forget this. Perhaps; but it is hard now to believe so. If you but knew how I loved him! I have heard it said there are different kinds of love, but I doubt that. It seems to me all real love has in it the one great desire to make supremely happy the one beloved, gaining from such accomplishment a sweet content worth thrice all the pains. My happiness was in making father happy, and now he is gone, I must be ever miserable; for I do not, I can never love anybody else as I did him."

I stole a glance at her. She sat at the base of the magnolia, her body bent slightly forward, her clasped hands lying in her lap, her eyes fixed

thoughtfully upon the ground. Around her face strands of her glossy auburn hair, escaped from beneath her little cap, hung in charming disorder. She was calm now, but her flushed cheeks were wet with tears.

As my eyes lingered on what was at once the most beautiful and touching picture I had ever seen, she came out of her reverie with a little sigh and got quickly to her feet.

"It is time to go, Mr. Lindsay — the sun will be down when we reach camp."

I fetched the horses and we started. We continued silent long after reaching the open pine country, where we could ride side by side. She, no doubt, was thinking of her father; of his unknown resting-place in the swamp; of our fruitless search; of the brother ignorant of his loss; of the home in Tennessee, henceforth so desolate.

More often my own thoughts were concerned with the girl beside me. Plainly she was a type of the noblest womanhood. Upon the treasures of Muriel's heart no love save that of a fond parent had drawn. Perhaps other demands had been made but rejected; yet one would come, I thought, which she must honour; and then I fell to envying him who might become the possessor of that for the like of which I would gladly have given my all.

Muriel broke the silence as we drew near the camp. She spoke as if to herself.

"I don't understand it — why didn't he tell me of this trip? I know of nothing to have called him back to Miami, and he confided all his business to me. And then to lose his way in the swamps! No, I cannot understand."

Impulsively I opened my mouth to speak, but checked myself, coughed and looked down. A covert glance told me my companion had not observed my agitation.

I helped her to the ground at the door of her shack, turned the horses out to graze and limped toward Carrington's hut to inquire for the invalid. Her husband quickly advanced to meet me. His wife was better, he said; but I noted the shadow lingering on his brow in spite of this apparent wish to have me suppose him cheerful.

I prepared supper, of which only Muriel and I partook. Carrington explained he had already eaten with his wife. Muriel told me she had been to see the sick woman, but that Carrington had asked her not to insist, as her presence might excite his wife, which, indeed, seemed reasonable under the circumstances.

As Muriel and I sat near the fire in the deepening twilight, I eating heartily and she making a brave

pretense, but little more than tasting what my care had provided, the sound of stifled sobs and moaning lamentations reached us, mingled with Carrington's low soothing voice, coming out through the curtained door of his shack.

CHAPTER VIII

A RELUCTANT SUMMONS

THREE or four days passed without any change for the better in Mrs. Carrington's condition. I was in a quandary. I knew the woman needed my assistance, but I had no excuse to press it upon her, since her husband had promised to call me, when in his judgment it should become necessary. And, indeed, should I venture to question his judgment, he might defend it as based upon a familiarity with his wife's disorder gained through experience during many similar attacks, together with the instructions he must have received from her Nashville physician to make him competent to deal with emergencies like the present.

At first Carrington affected to be sanguine of his wife's early recovery, assuring Muriel and me she would soon be with us again; but I knew he was far from feeling the confidence he expressed. As the days passed without his prediction being verified, he made less effort to conceal this fact. His distress was pitiable. All his time he devoted

to the invalid. He seldom left his shack unless upon some errand for her, and his haggard features and inflamed eyes proclaimed that his care extended throughout both night and day. Only a physique like his could have endured successfully the constant strain. But he gave no indications of breaking down until despair began to seize upon him.

As he felt the case slipping beyond his control, he more than once showed an earnest desire to call me into consultation, seeing which I would promptly repeat the tender of my services; but apparently that act always enabled him to discover some unexpected improvement in his wife's condition, simplifying the situation, as he would say, and making it such as he could deal with unassisted. I found the only way I could be of use was to suggest remedies after hearing him describe his wife's symptoms. Several times, indeed, he asked me to do this.

He continued to advance the same objection to my seeing the patient, explaining that the mere mention of my name or that of Muriel was sure to recall to her the tragedy of the swamp and the loss her beloved young friend had suffered, throwing her at once into a lamentable state. But, be that as it might, I saw the time was near when he must

invite me to the invalid's bedside. Plainly his wife's condition was becoming desperate, and he knew it. He had exhausted his resources. I might be able to help him, and his great love would at last lead him to call upon me, no matter from what cause his reluctance might spring. He was obviously in a painful dilemma; but sure of the result, I waited.

Muriel accepted her exclusion from the presence of the sufferer as natural under the circumstances; but I could see she thought mine strange, though she did not express herself. Certainly there did not appear the same reason. Muriel was an intimate friend whose sudden and shocking bereavement had stirred Mrs. Carrington's sympathies deeply; I was a chance acquaintance whose only connection with the fatal happening was that I had brought the news of it. But, as I have stated, Muriel made no comment. Not yielding to the wish to sit idly down and nurse her own bleeding heart while there was another's suffering to relieve, she did all she could for the invalid's comfort, preparing many a tidbit and strengthening beverage from the camp's supplies; some, I may add, under my own direction.

Carrington was touched by the girl's solicitude. There was something humble, apologetic, even remorseful in the way he accepted her kindness.

Only as a result of it was he able to maintain his almost uninterrupted watch at his wife's bedside. His attendance there threw upon me all the duties of the camp, but, as my ankle did not trouble me after the second day, I discharged them easily. Besides, Muriel, in spite of my protest, insisted upon helping me with the cooking. I concluded this was just as well; for, being occupied, she could not brood over her sorrow. Acting upon this idea, I often took her on my fishing trips, undertaken as purveyor to the camp, upon the pretext that she knew better than I the pools where the lines could be cast with most likelihood of success. Usually she went, solely at first, I could see, from a wish not to distress me, whose concern on her account was evident. My excursions into the hummock with my gun were as a rule made on foot and always resulted in my returning to camp with game of various kinds. Brutus, Hampton's pointer, was of material help to me on these trips. The dog made friends with me from the start, which was in marked contrast to his conduct toward Carrington, for whom he entertained a fear and dislike the more remarkable because, so far as I could see, it was not explained by any ill-usage he received at that gentleman's hands.

One morning — the fifth following my discovery

in the swamp — Carrington in answer to my usual inquiry told me his wife was worse.

"Carrington," I exclaimed impulsively, "you had better let me see her. I owe my life to you all, and I want to prove I am not ungrateful. The good I can do her will outweigh any evil results the sight of me might cause."

"If she is not better by noon, I will ask you to come," he promised in a husky voice.

I told him I would be within call. I had intended going to the hummock to vary our fare with venison; but went instead a short distance up the stream with my fishing rod, informing him of my destination. I stopped by Muriel's hut, securing her company and telling her on the way of the news from Mrs. Carrington and of the probability of my being summoned.

"I am glad," declared Muriel emphatically. "I don't understand why it wasn't done long ago; it ought to have been."

I agreed that in view of Carrington's great affection for his wife, his delay seemed strange.

"That is the point," asserted the girl; "it is plain he worships her. And the feeling is mutual; I have never known a more devoted couple."

"Has Mrs. Carrington always been an invalid?" I asked.

"I have known her only a little over a year. She and her husband came to Nashville from the North on account of her health. But I do not think it has been so distressingly bad until just prior to our coming here. I think perhaps the necessity of being separated so much from her husband was largely responsible."

"I did not know of that necessity," I said, quickly interested.

"His business kept him much in the North," explained Muriel. "He owns real estate in a number of cities and has a fortune invested in the Pennsylvania coal mines, I believe. His presence was required at one place or another, so that often he would not see his wife for a month at a time, and then only for a day or two."

"Under those circumstances he had little opportunity to make intimate friends in Nashville," was my comment.

"I don't suppose either of them know a dozen people there. During Mr. Carrington's brief stays at home, they had no visitors and made no calls; and, while he was away, Mrs. Carrington lived secluded. We were their nearest neighbours out on the Harding pike; yet they were there six months before father became acquainted with Mr. Carrington, quite by accident. I met Mrs. Carring-

ton several weeks later, when this trip to Florida was planned."

"Mr. Carrington and your father appear to have become excellent friends in the brief time they knew each other."

"Don't you think Mr. Carrington a fascinating man?"

"Very."

Muriel was thoughtful. "Father was charmed with him," she said, adding after a slight pause: "And he seemed very fond of father."

"Yes," I assented; "exceedingly so."

The girl sighed deeply. "And his influence over father was great, very great," she breathed as if to herself. She was gazing meditatively into the water. I was silent, and presently she raised her eyes, looking long and wistfully into my face.

"If it were not ill-bred, I would ask you a question," she announced.

I smiled. "Perhaps that was the thought in *my* mind," I said.

"Really?" Her eyes opened in surprise.

"And the questions might not be very different," I suggested.

"That is soon tested," she declared. "Was yours anything like this: What do you think of Mr. Carrington?"

"The identical question," I assured her.

"Do you find it easy to answer?"

"Quite the contrary."

"I agree with you."

"Yet you have known him much longer than I have?"

"Well, I have discovered one thing: it is hard to entertain doubts when in his presence."

"Doubts?"

"Yes. Don't you find something mysterious about him?"

"I admit I do."

We sat musing for fully a minute. Then she regarded me again with that wistful expression.

"Mr. Lindsay," she said sweetly, "I have understood the sincerity of your sympathy and it gives me confidence in your friendship. If I discuss another's character with you, I am sure you will know it is not in the spirit of gossip. We have not been acquainted long, and yet I have known you by reputation for years. You are puzzled, I see," she added, smiling at the bewildered, questioning look I fixed upon her. Then in explanation: "I often visit the Armstrongs in St. Louis; Ellen is one of my dearest friends."

"Oh!" I ejaculated. My eyes fell and I felt the blood surging to my face. Beyond question

Muriel knew of my domestic difficulties and their cause. She must have guessed my thoughts; for she shared my embarrassment, and for a moment neither spoke.

"The fact that I am ready to trust you, shows how well your friends have spoken of you," she finally said, her manner conveying more than the words.

"I thank all who believe in me and I try to deserve their confidence," I declared earnestly.

"Let me prove I am of that number," she answered smiling. "I had mentioned my doubts in connection with Mr. Carrington. There is an indefiniteness about him and his affairs that perplexes me. Nobody knows exactly where his coal mines are located or in what cities of the North he owns real estate. He disccusses his business freely at times and seemingly without desire for concealment; but later, when you come to sift his remarks, you are astonished to find they contain no information. I called father's attention to this, but he thought I did Mr. Carrington injustice. What surprised me was his ready conquest of father. From your knowledge of our old Southern families, Mr. Lindsay, you will understand that, while we pride ourselves on hospitality, we are slow to accept as intimate friends those of whom we know practically

nothing. We have had no evidence as to who or what Mr. Carrington is. We are totally uninformed as to his or his wife's family, though we were given to understand all the near relatives to both are dead. It seems odd that no friends from their former home ever visited them in Nashville, and that they never sought to make new friends there, except father and me. It is hardly too much to say that they seemed to shrink from observation. During her husband's long absences Mrs. Carrington seldom stirred from the house. I wonder that she did not die of loneliness. It was plain, too, that she liked company; I never doubted the sincerity of her pleasure when she welcomed father and me to her house. She is fond of me, as you have noticed. Once I remonstrated with her upon living so much alone. I told her she would feel better by mixing with people and going to places of amusement. She was obviously at a loss to answer me, but finally said that her physician had recommended perfect rest as well as a warmer climate. Her embarrassment was so evident I never mentioned the subject again. There is something about Mrs. Carrington that appeals to me. I like her and am very sorry for her."

Muriel ceased. She sat looking intently at the ground, tapping her lips thoughtfully with her

fingers. After waiting for her to resume, I renewed the conversation by asking a question.

"Pardon me, Miss Hampton, but have you reason to think Carrington's friendship for your father less genuine than that of his wife for you?"

"Yes," she answered promptly. "I dislike to say it, but it seems to me that Mr. Carrington's chief purpose in ingratiating himself with father was to secure an invitation to visit this island. He learned of its existence at his first meeting with father, and also the fact that the approach was known only to father and Dudley. At once he pretended to be an ardent sportsman, and mentioned something about the doctor's having advised camping in the far South during the winter months for his wife's health. There are other places he might have gone. I don't know why he had his heart set on this, as plainly he had. It was not because of the superior hunting and fishing, for soon after we got here it was evident he knew little and cared less about either."

"Surely your father must have remarked that fact in view of his former pretensions," I said.

"He would have; but his partiality for Mr. Carrington blinded him."

"Their friendship continued as warm as ever after reaching the island?"

"Oh, yes! Understand me, Mr. Lindsay, I believe Mr. Carrington liked father — nobody who knew him could help that," she added affectionately. "But I am convinced he affected a warmer regard than he really felt, for the purpose I have mentioned."

"They never had any business dealings, I suppose?"

"None whatever."

"I thought perhaps your father's sudden departure for Miami might be thus explained."

"His departure is, indeed, a mystery; but it cannot be cleared in that way. Frankly, I suspected Mr. Carrington might be seeking to interest father in some scheme likely to prove disastrous to him financially, and I hinted of my fears to father; but he was explicit in his statement that his friend had never advanced the least suggestion looking to business relations of any kind with him. He repeated this assurance the day before he left the island."

"Then you do not connect Carrington at all with your father's sudden leave-taking?"

Muriel did not answer at once. She considered deeply a while; then slowly raised her head and fixed her anxious, puzzled gaze upon me.

"I don't know," she admitted; "I have no rea-

son to do so. But sometimes Mr. Carrington's manner has made me think he has not been frank with me — that he has kept something back — in a word, that he might make things clearer if he chose."

"Do you suppose they could have quarrelled?" I asked in a low tone.

"Impossible!" declared Muriel in surprise. "What can have caused you to ask?"

"I hardly know," I answered; "no doubt the question was foolish."

"As I have said, he undoubtedly liked father. We saw how he behaved when you brought that dreadful news from the swamp."

"He seemed very much affected," I said, as I busied myself with baiting a hook.

Several moments passed during which I was occupied with my thoughts and Muriel was doubtless absorbed in hers. I started at the sound of her voice.

"It is your time to answer the question, Mr. Lindsay," she said, smiling.

"As to what I think of Carrington? Why, you know I have not known him nearly so long as you have, and therefore cannot be so explicit. Indeed, all I can say is that there seems an indescribable air of mystery about him. And I can't account for his

reluctance to have me wait upon his wife in her illness."

"I have tried in vain to find a satisfactory reason for it," said Muriel.

"At any rate, the time is almost at hand when he will yield," I asserted. "And believe me, I want to prove I am not ungrateful for the care bestowed by them upon me when I was thrown a helpless, dying man among you. Mrs. Carrington's condition has moved my deepest pity, and I will rejoice when I can make an active, earnest effort in her behalf."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when a wild shout sounded from the camp. I threw down my pole and started to my feet.

"Lindsay! come quick, for God's sake!"

"Go!" cried Muriel excitedly; "I will follow you as quickly as I can."

I dashed through the brush into the clearing and over the hill, giving an answering shout to Carrington as I left the stream. I saw him turn and run back into the shack. In another moment I also had entered. The motionless figure of Mrs. Carrington lay on one of the pallets, her eyes half-closed, her head thrown back and her pallid lips apart. By her side knelt her husband with his arms about her and his ear pressed over her heart. He

raised his head as he heard me coming and looked around.

"My God, Lindsay! I'm afraid it's too late!"

I passed hurriedly to the opposite side of the pallet and bent over the recumbent form.

CHAPTER IX

THE END OF A JOURNEY

At first I thought Carrington was right and that his wife had passed beyond all human aid; but at last I detected a faint heart beat. Muriel had entered and the three of us set to work with a will; yet fully five minutes passed before Mrs. Carrington showed signs of returning consciousness. At the first of these, Muriel drew back and, attracting my attention, made a slight motion toward the door, while she regarded me with a look of inquiry. I nodded "yes," and she quietly left the shack. At this particular crisis I felt it might be disastrous for the patient to see her. Carrington was obviously relieved at her departure and seemed gratified, too, when I retired to the other side of the hut as his wife opened her eyes. He kissed her with infinite tenderness.

"You are better now, dearest; you are very much better."

The invalid murmured something inarticulate.

"Don't, my own little girl; don't try to talk," he pleaded. "You aren't strong enough yet."

"Yes," she panted; "we must go — we must go at once!"

"We will go, darling; don't worry."

"But when? I had it ready and you wouldn't come. We will take nothing but that."

"Hush, Alice, hush, my love! We will go when you have had some sleep."

She looked earnestly at him. "Will you?"

"Yes, darling."

"Then I will try, for I am, oh, so weary!" She sighed and made a slight movement as if to compose herself, but suddenly burst out: "Oh! if we had never come to this horrible place!"

"There, there, there! be calm; we will leave as soon as you have rested." He stroked her brow soothingly, now and then bending down and touching his lips to her face. She lay quite still. I sat in silence, in the background ready for any call. Perhaps a quarter of an hour had passed when Carrington cautiously looked around and by a gesture gave me to understand the patient was asleep. I motioned to him and we rose and tip-toed to the door of the shack.

"Carrington, do you know what caused the trouble?" I asked in a low voice.

"It was all my fault; I went to sleep and —" He broke into a low deep cursing of himself that fairly chilled my blood.

"Don't," I protested; "you couldn't help it. The wonder is that you have endured so long. Listen: That attack was heart failure brought on by some physical exertion which your wife in her weak and nervous condition should not have made. Another such attack would result fatally beyond a doubt; therefore we must guard against it. I speak plainly, for I want you to grasp the seriousness of the situation. You are not in a condition to watch her; no human power could prevent your falling asleep again. If her life is to be saved, I must remain in this hut."

"I want you to stay," he announced. There was a strange mixture of entreaty and defiance in his manner.

Merely inclining my head to express at once my satisfaction and acquiescence I turned back toward the invalid's couch; but he checked me by a hand upon my arm, while he pointed to a satchel that lay overturned by the open trunk in the corner.

"See that?" was his whispered query. "While I was asleep, she rose and took it from the trunk. I knew nothing of what she was doing till she woke me, saying she had our necessaries packed and beg-

ging me to take her from the island at once. My God! can it be she is never to leave?" He made a despairing gesture and, crossing to the satchel, started to lift it. It was bottom side up, had become unfastened and its contents were scattered on the floor, though what they were I could not see, as they lay in a dark corner of the shack. Apparently Carrington had not noticed the accident; for upon observing it, he cast a startled look at me and then stooping so as to interpose his body, replaced whatever had escaped, put the satchel in the trunk and locked the trunk as I had seen him do before. However, I marked a folded newspaper resting close against the side of a box where he did not see it, and I wondered whether it too had not fallen from the bag, remembering how Mrs. Carrington had been employed when I alarmed her by coming out of my long delirium.

I resolutely repressed my curiosity. Dark suspicions had assailed me concerning Carrington ever since my discovery of the bullet-hole in the skull of Hampton's horse, and they were strengthened by what I had since seen and heard. I had determined to make every effort to learn the truth; but I could not prevail upon myself to begin my investigations now. It seemed like taking an unfair advantage of his distress. I realized that I was in his

hut to relieve human suffering and to repay some of the kindness I had received at the hands of this couple. Later I would settle my doubts, and, if I found guilt, I would denounce it at the proper time and place. The thought of the gentle, heroic girl, so dignified, so pathetic in her grief, made unalterable that resolve, though my simple desire to see justice done would have sufficed to make me keep it.

But at present, as I have stated, I was not in the shack as a spy; and what is more, I think Carrington appreciated that fact. Nevertheless, he plainly did not intend to give me greater opportunities than he could help. I tried to induce him to lie down and take the rest he needed; but he steadfastly refused, resuming his place by his wife's bedside. There his fight against drowsiness was pitiable; but it finally overcame him, and he fell against the wall asleep.

The patient's slumber was fitful; her limbs started, her fingers twitched and clutched at the cover and occasionally she uttered ejaculations and broken sentences. It was distressing to watch the play of her features, now softened with pity, now distorted with horror, and now, as I thought, assuming an expression of fidelity and devotion. The words which escaped her seemed born of the emotions successively depicted; I could not avoid hearing them, though I did my best to keep from play-

ing the eavesdropper. As the tears rolled down her cheeks, she would call: "Muriel! Muriel!" Then, as her teeth became set and her breath quickened: "Cushman! — no! no! no! no!" in a tone of frenzied protest. Again she would murmur her husband's name softly. These words she kept repeating in a mournful tone: "Deep in the lake, deep in the lake — oh! oh! oh!" The woe in her accents would have touched a heart of stone.

As I sat looking at her I realized that once she must have been a very attractive woman. She was small and delicately formed, seeming a mere child by the side of her giant husband. Her features were regular and dainty and I could well imagine the charm they had exercised when lit with the glow of youth and health. Youth indeed lingered; for Mrs. Carrington could not have been more than thirty — the lines in her face were traced by suffering, physical and mental. I fell to speculating upon her past — who she was before her marriage, how she met Carrington, what was the history of that exceptionally strong attachment. The mystery enveloping her husband enshrouded her; what might be the result should those lips tell unreservedly the secrets of that bosom? No doubt she had had her seasons of joy as of sorrow, of pleasure as of suffer-

ing; but it was all near the end now — very, very near.

I sighed, and rising cautiously, went to the door and looked out. A stiff breeeze was making mournful music among the pines. I thought it might be coming through the window too briskly upon the sick woman, and, turning back into the shack, advanced and drew the curtain across the aperture. Then I returned to the bedside and stood looking down at the slumberer.

Suddenly she sat bolt upright, her eyes wild and glassy, her nostrils dilated.

"Mrs. Carrington! my dear Mrs. Carrington!" I protested, instantly seizing and trying to force her gently back.

She began to struggle frantically. "Let me go! Cushman! Cushman! get the satchel! The ports are no longer watched — it is safe! We must go! we must go!"

"Carrington!" I called, "Carrington!"

He did not stir. His worn-out frame leaned heavily against the wall, his head sunk upon his breast. I heard his loud, regular breathing.

I tried to reach across the couch and touch him, but a more determined effort on the part of the patient to get to her feet, claimed my attention, defeating my purpose.

"I *will* go!" she shrieked. "We can get through the swamps! we can get out of the country! we can —"

It ended as suddenly as it began. In an instant she had ceased to struggle. Her muscles relaxed, her head dropped, and she lay a dead weight in my arms.

I gently lowered her to the bed and, clutching Carrington's knee, shook him vigorously. "Carrington, wake up! your wife is dying!"

He sprang to his feet, dazed. I was on the opposite side of the hut and tossed him the folded paper by the box.

"Fan her!" I commanded, and mechanically he obeyed.

An instant later I had secured restoratives from the medicine chest and rejoined him at the bedside. Muriel had heard the confusion and entered as I called for water to bathe the patient's head.

"There is some in my hut," she announced and started to fetch it; but Carrington, now alert, anticipated her, dashing out of the door with the paper clutched in his hand and returning immediately with water that Muriel had brought from the spring.

I knew in my heart it was useless. But I could not bring myself to say so at once; so we laboured assiduously for a while. Then I began to slacken

my efforts and Muriel understood and drew back, regarding Carrington, who continued to lave his wife's brow with tearful pity. I advanced and laid my hand kindly upon his shoulder.

"Carrington," I said gently, "we have done all we could; she is gone."

"Gone?" He put down the dampened cloth and held his ear above the dead woman's heart for fully a minute. Then he rose and stood regarding her. "Yes," he said quite calmly, "she is gone."

"Oh, Mr. Carrington! you can understand how I sympathize with you!" Muriel's voice broke as she touched his arm.

He shrank away, and, uttering no word, covered his face with his hands. A moment thus; then with a long, tremulous sigh, he crossed to the opposite side of the shack and sat upon a camp stool, resting his elbows upon his knees and burying his face in his palms.

Muriel's tears flowed silently. She tenderly smoothed the hair from the brow of the corpse on which, stooping, she pressed her fresh, warm lips. I came to her assistance, composing the features and crossing the hands upon the breast. But here came a sharp cry from Carrington, and, rushing to the couch, he flung himself upon his knees beside it and gave way to a burst of grief frightful in its

unrestrained violence. I shall not attempt to picture it — it was indescribable. It revealed, however, a despair that hoped for nothing beyond the grave, a reckless, defiant, blaspheming atheism that sent Muriel shuddering from the hut. There was nothing I could say or do; so I merely waited till the vehemence of his emotions had quite exhausted him, after which I induced him, not without protest, to swallow a potion I had prepared and to lie down on the vacant pallet. In less than half an hour the power of the draught, acting upon a system weakened by mental anguish and previous long vigils, mercifully buried his senses in oblivion.

Then began my long, lonely watch. Muriel wanted to share it but I refused to allow her. It was night when she left me to go to her shack after we had partaken sparingly of the fish and corncakes she prepared. I drew a stool to the door and sat down. All was dark within. The only sound was the heavy breathing of Carrington, broken at intervals by his mutterings and the noise of his restless tossings. But presently an owl, perched on the liveoak by the window, started the nightly chorus of the wilds by sending forth his dismal whoop. His mate answered him from the hummock, others took up the cry, and in a little while the woods everywhere were ringing to the weird concert. The

croaking of the frogs in the surrounding marshes swelled into a steady accompaniment, while now and then the voice of the night heron rose above all. Once I heard the barking of a fox at no great distance and Brutus, who sat on his haunches just outside the door, lifted his muzzle high in the air and uttered a long, plaintive howl. The owl in the tree grew bolder and, lighting on the window sill, sent his shrill, quavering notes into the shack and over the white, cold face that lay only a foot beneath him. He maintained his post so persistently that I was forced to rise and drive him away with a stick. Carrington was not awakened by the noise; he only moaned and stirred slightly. I resumed my seat on the stool and sat looking out into the night. The wind had died down with the close of day. Only a few embers of the camp-fire continued to glow, and I watched these gradually disappear in the darkness. Then remained only the ghostly glimmer of the starlight on the white sand.

I thought of home, of Effie, of Gridley, of Tom, and wondered what my friend was so anxious to tell me as Bill and I had sped away in the smack. I lived over in my imagination my experiences on the water, in the cypress, and on the island. I reviewed the strange events since my arrival and speculated upon the probable outcome. What was the

journey which the dying woman had risen from her bed to make? Of course I did not know, but I realized that some haunting terror had possessed her and I thought it might have been God's infinite mercy and pity for her that had ended her life on this lonely island among the swamps.

CHAPTER X

WHAT I SAW IN THE PAPER

We buried Mrs. Carrington in a little glade a few hundred yards from camp, where the shadow of magnolia and holly fell upon her resting-place. Her husband, rejecting my aid, took her body in his powerful arms and carried it there. We laid her in the grave I had dug and covered her face with a light mantle. Then I took from Muriel a little testament and asked Carrington whether I might read from it. He replied that it made no difference, and I opened the book at that beautiful fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to Corinthians, which has brought hope and comfort to so many aching hearts. But plainly the words had no meaning for the man looking into the grave.

He retired and stood with his back turned while I threw in the sand. When I had finished, I went to him.

"Mr. Carrington, we are going back."

"Yes," he answered, "I am ready."

He went to the mound and stood silent, motion-

less for nearly a minute. Then he rejoined us and we moved toward camp.

Muriel walked beside me. The revelation of Carrington's unbelief and the violence of his nature, shown in that death-bed scene, had awed and shocked her. She shrank from him visibly, though I think she pitied him more than ever.

I felt it might be trying to her to be left alone with him long; therefore I postponed an expedition I had suddenly become very anxious to make, believing it might help to clear the mystery of Hampton's disappearance. However, I was to make a discovery without leaving camp.

It was easy to supply the larder with game without going far from the shacks. The nearest point of the hummock proper was across the prairie to the east, and, on the afternoon of the second day following the burial of Mrs. Carrington, I took the shotgun and started to get some squirrels for supper. Muriel was mending the rents made in her riding skirt on our strenuous trip, while Carrington remained moody and disconsolate in his shack, whence, indeed, he had scarcely stirred since his wife's death.

As I entered the open, my attention was attracted by a piece of paper fluttering in the light breeze among some bushes directly ahead. I saw it was a

newspaper, and, moved by vague curiosity, halted when I came to the spot and picked it up. It was a copy of the Miami *Register;* I folded and placed it in my pocket to examine more thoroughly when I reached the shade of the hummock. I reflected this was the first newspaper I had seen on the island, except —

I stopped short and uttered an involuntary, low whistle. Could this be the paper I had tossed to Carrington to fan his dying wife? I recalled seeing him leave the hut for water with that paper in his hand; but I was not certain he held it when he returned; I had given the matter no thought at the time.

But, assuming he had dropped it outside, its presence where I found it was easy to account for. The spot was less than three hundred yards from the camp, and on that day a lively wind was blowing from the west. The direction had since changed, but I could not recall that the force at any time had been so great, and the fact that I found the paper entangled and held fast by the bushes, where it evidently had been securely lodged by the stronger blasts, might explain why it had not later been sent out of its original course. I mended my pace, and as soon as I entered the hummock, threw myself upon the ground, drew my find from my pocket and

spread it out before me. I had no scruples now; this was different from playing the spy at a death-bed.

A large, irregular piece was torn off the lower, left-hand corner. My eye caught a three-column portrait on the first page, such as the news syndicates send to papers of this class. The *Register* was better printed than the average newspaper of small towns, and this particular half-tone was quite distinct.

Where had I seen that face? It was a strong, handsome face, bearded, but not heavily, and — Was it possible? Yes, I was sure of it!

It was the face of the man I had surprised at the foot of the tree — in other words of Carrington!

I was so absorbed in identifying the picture that I had taken no note of the reading matter accompanying it, and now for the first time my senses grasped the meaning of the glaring headline. This is what I read:

"Chicago Embezzler! The above is an excellent likeness of Chester E. Sanford, for seven years trusted financial agent of the Inter-State Loan and Investment Company of Chicago. Sanford disappeared from Chicago February 1st, since when nothing has been heard of him. He made frequent trips to other cities in the interests of his company

and no suspicion attached to his absence till a discrepancy in his accounts was accidentally discovered the day after he left. Immediate investigation showed he had been robbing his employers systematically for years. His stealings will much exceed $100,000. More than half this amount was taken just prior to his flight. Sanford neither gambled or drank, but his wife is notoriously extravagant and their home life was unhappy. Mrs. Sanford was left behind in Chicago and the police accept her statement that she knows nothing of the whereabouts of her husband. The Inter-State Investment Company offers a reward of $5,000 for the capture of Sanford. The early discovery of his shortage makes it improbable that he has succeeded in escaping from the country. Pictures and descriptions have been scattered broadcast and a close watch has been kept at all the ports. Sanford is forty years old, six feet two inches tall and weighs about two hundred and twenty pounds. Hair and beard dark brown, eyes rather small and very black."

I finished and sat staring blankly at the paper. My brain was whirling. This discovery paralyzed me. But at last I could think clearly.

The reasons for the secluded life at Nashville were now apparent. Carrington, or rather Sanford, had lived a double existence. The woman we had

buried was not his wife, but one for whom he had abandoned her having a legal claim to his protection. To escape with the partner of his guilty passion he had robbed the men who trusted him. I believed this illicit connection had existed long before the couple went to Nashville. The laws of God and man condemn its like; yet my censure was softened in spite of me by remembrance of scenes between them which proved the existence of something very different from the stormy, fitful passion that usually characterizes such attachments. They loved as man and wife should, and I found myself regretting the hard fate that interposed an obstacle making criminal what otherwise would have been the most sacred relation.

That Sanford obtained an invitation to the island proved his plans carefully and deliberately laid. His last embezzlement was a very large one, making an early discovery certain; its disclosure would render it impossible for him to get out of the country at once. But after three months the vigilance at the ports and elsewhere would be relaxed. Then he could emerge from his hiding-place, and, if questions were asked, the unsuspecting Hampton and his daughter would identify Mr. and Mrs. Carrington as their neighbours. Quietly the fugitives could slip off to some foreign country for permanent

refuge. That was evidently their intention; for the dying woman had urged upon Carrington that the ports were now clear.

The embezzler's greatest risk was in being apprehended before he reached his island retreat with Hampton. How had he managed that?

It was reasonable to suppose he had done all he could to change his personal appearance before leaving Chicago. The picture in the *Register* was bearded. An obvious disguise was to shave clean; yet I had found him wearing his beard when I came to the island. I recalled how my remembrance of that fact, observed in my delirium, had seemed to disturb the woman, Alice. Perhaps, after all, he had come to the island smooth-shaven. He had been there a month before I arrived, and in that time his beard could assume something of its usual appearance. Alarmed by the arrival of one from the outside world, where he knew his features, with beard of course, were now notorious, he might have sacrificed it a second time. It was important to know. As yet I had no real proof that Carrington was Sanford, the embezzler.

One thing puzzled me: If Hampton and Muriel were accustomed to seeing Carrington bearded, why had not *they* recognized him as Sanford, when his picture appeared in the papers of many cities? The

only explanation was that they had not seen it. I remembered Muriel's telling me she and her father were in Miami two weeks before they were joined there by the Carringtons on February 10th. In that out-of-the-way place they would be less likely to see a tell-tale picture soon after the disclosure of the crime, and it was quite possible Carrington had managed to have them precede him there for that reason.

I looked again at the paper in my hand. The date was February 10th.

At first I never doubted that Carrington had brought it to the island. But presently I asked myself how he acquired it. I recalled more Muriel had told me. She and her father had met Carrington's train early on the morning of February 10th. The immediate departure of the whole party for their final destination had been arranged for by wire. There was no stop made in the town; the newcomers had attired themselves in the sleeper for their ride through the swamps. As the *Register* is a weekly — Miami boasts no daily — they would not have bought it on the street. And, if by some unusual chance, Carrington or his paramour had picked it up, why had they kept such incriminating evidence? I had seen it in the satchel which I now felt sure contained the money the man had stolen.

But that did not really prove either he or the woman had brought it to the island.

The argument against Hampton's or Muriel's having brought it seemed obvious: They would have discovered its contents and denounced the guilty couple. In the hurry of departure they might not have examined the paper till after reaching the island — it was certain Muriel never had done so. Yet if Hampton had carried it hither, he must at some time after his arrival have taken the trouble to look at it; and that, no doubt, would have sent him back to Miami to the authorities for —

I caught my breath and my heart beat so fast it almost choked me. Had I hit upon the cause of Hampton's fatal journey? Was this paper connected with the dark tragedy I believed had happened?

As I bent over it again with eager scrutiny, my eye fell upon an article which seemed to support the supposition that Hampton had brought the paper; it dealt with a project for draining the adjacent swamps. I looked quickly at the bottom of the page for his signature, but that was the part torn off.

Near the ragged edges I saw some dark, little specks I had not observed before. I examined them intently. They were not ink — I was sure of that. They looked more like —

Yes! — they were blood!

Again for a while I was incapable of thought. Then carefully I folded the paper, returned it to my pocket and sat down again on the ground, from which I had risen in my excitement, to form my theory and discover what links I must supply in my chain of evidence.

I believed Hampton had bought the paper just before leaving Miami; that he had not read it till after reaching the island; that, having learned its contents, he imprudently allowed Carrington to discover his knowledge, perhaps in the heat of his resentment denouncing him openly, parading the paper as evidence, and threatening to go back to Miami for officers; that to prevent this Sanford had ended his accuser's life, securing the fatal paper spattered with his victim's blood; that he had led Hampton's horse into the swamp and shot him to guard against his returning too soon, thus discrediting his story of his friend's sudden return to Miami; and that later he had confided the truth to the woman he called his wife, or — what is more likely — that she had discovered it, perhaps through the blood-stained paper, which in his excitement he might have failed to destroy and which possibly had been preserved thereafter through the morbid impulse that often exists in such cases.

I would set quietly to work to prove my theory. Neither Carrington nor Muriel must suspect what I was about — Carrington for obvious reasons; Muriel, because, if it proved true, she must be saved from the horror of having knowingly to pass several months on this lonely island in the society of her father's murderer! She could tell me some things I wanted to know, but I must draw them from her with caution. I would make my evidence complete and, when they came to take us off the island, I would confront the startled Carrington with my accusations and see that he did not escape.

I was doubly anxious now to make the expedition I previously referred to. As the dying woman kept on with that mournful repetition, "deep in the lake, deep in the lake," I had been reminded of the body of water in the southern end of the island, of which Carrington had told me, and of the significant fact, mentioned by Muriel, that her father had gone there with Carrington to fish and to hunt water-fowl early on the morning of the day when, according to his companion, he had suddenly decided he must return to Miami.

CHAPTER XI

BRUTUS RETRIEVES AND I AM INCAUTIOUS

In the days that followed I could see a change taking place in Carrington — to avoid confusion I will continue to call him by that name, though it was now plain he had no right to it. The change was what one would naturally expect, understanding the loss he had sustained and his materialistic, hopeless philosophy, not to speak of the sense of guilt that must have oppressed him, if he had murdered his friend, as I supposed. A calm, desperate resignation showed itself in his demeanour. It was as if everything worth living for had passed out of his existence and he cared not what stroke of fortune might now befall. I believe he made one or two visits by night to the little mound among the holly and magnolia; but after the first few days I could not discover that he repeated them. He had little to say, and plainly avoided Muriel. They seldom met except at meal time, and then Carrington's manner was subdued; but he was quietly attentive

to the girl's wants and seemed, indeed, to find satisfaction in anticipating them. She noticed it and tried to overcome her shrinking from him, but without success.

"If only I were sure of his understanding that I really do sympathize with him, I should be satisfied," she said to me. "But I don't know how to tell him; there is so little in common between us — we view our bereavements so differently."

"I would not trouble myself about it," I told her; "I am sure he understands."

"Are you, indeed?" she asked, looking at me earnestly.

I again expressed that belief and she sat thoughtful a moment.

"But there is something else that troubles me," she presently announced. Then in answer to my look of inquiry: "I am repelled by him; I can't help it!"

"Don't try to," I advised, impulsively.

"It's those awful words he spoke over his wife's dead body," she explained. "I pity him more because he has not the hope of the Christian, because he believes in no God, no hereafter, no anything; but mingled with my pity is a fear, a horror I cannot overcome — I think it due to the impious way in which he expressed himself."

"It is hard to understand how one can think as he does," I said in reply.

"It is," she assented; "it is indeed."

Among the less important signs of a change in Carrington was a disregard for his personal appearance. Of course one is not expected to pay the same attention to that in a hunter's camp as he would in a large city; but until now Carrington had never neglected such regard to the details of his toilet as was possible under the circumstances. Now, however, he wore his linen after it was soiled, allowed the dust and dirt to accumulate on his clothes, did not replace missing buttons and sometimes went uncombed and, I suspect, unwashed too. He had shaved regularly since I came to the island, even in the trying times of his wife's illness; now he suffered his beard to grow.

Muriel commented upon the change it made in his appearance. "You will see, if he allows it to grow to its usual length," she said. "You will hardly recognize him; and strangely enough it is not a heavy beard either. I suppose it is in the way he trims it."

"I agree with you that it is rather scanty. You know he wore it the day I reached the island."

"Why, I had forgotten. But it is heavier than

that. It hadn't had time to grow out; for he was smooth-shaven when he came here."

"Oh!" I remarked, carelessly, "I didn't know that was the way he usually went."

"It isn't," declared Muriel; "I never saw him without his beard till we met him in Miami."

I set myself to verify a more important point. In one of my conversations with Muriel I brought up the subject of the island, remarking, naturally enough, that Carrington had told me how it happened to be discovered, but had not stated, as I remembered, whether it had been found possible to drain the swamps surrounding it.

"There were various opinions," answered Muriel. "Father thought it might be done."

"It would mean much to this part of the State, and I should think that those who considered it practicable would urge their views in the press and otherwise," I hazarded.

"Father did," was Muriel's prompt answer. "Only a few days before we left Miami I wrote at his dictation an article for the *Register,* a local weekly, outlining his idea of the methods which should be employed. It was at the request of the editor, who frequently agitates the question."

"I should like to read the article," I murmured.

"Father brought a copy of the paper to the

island," said Muriel; "but I don't know what has become of it. I have never seen it since a messenger from the newspaper office handed it to him in the hotel lobby as we started to the train to meet Mr. and Mrs. Carrington."

Thus it was established that Hampton brought the paper. It was also evident that in the hurry of departure he had not looked at it. What caused his delay in becoming acquainted with its contents after reaching the island, or at least in apprising Carrington of the information he had gained or suffering him unintentionally to discover it, I did not trouble myself to find out then, feeling it, indeed, to be only of secondary importance.

Carrington's avoidance of Muriel gave me an early opportunity for making my trip to the lake. As soon as he left off moping about the hut, he would take his gun and, going into the hummock in the early morning, would remain until nearly dark. He always brought back game of some kind which he then set about preparing for the evening meal. When I saw this was a regular procedure, and thus felt reasonably sure Muriel would be relieved of the embarrassment of his society for a number of hours, I resolved to delay no longer, and early one bright morning I mounted a horse, whistled to Brutus, and, with Carrington's Win-

chester lying across the pommel of my saddle, started upon my expedition. Carrington had already taken the shotgun and entered the hummock in a different direction.

I had never been to the lake before, but I found it without difficulty. As I approached it I emerged from the hummock into open pine land, and presently reaching the crest of a long rise, looked down into a treeless basin toward which the land on this side sloped rather more abruptly, and in the midst of which I saw the clear waters flashing in the sunlight. Numerous ducks, herons, and other waterfowl were visible among the rushes around the shallow borders, and, looking for Brutus, I saw him already worming his way through the tall sedge grass of the bottom. I called him to me as I rode down the hill; I was not there to hunt game of that kind.

The lake was smaller than I had supposed, being not much over three hundred yards long and considerably less across the widest part. Keeping the dog near me, I circled slowly around it close to the edge of the water. The sandhill cranes, in native parlance "whooping-johns," sprang up before me and made off with discordant cries. The ducks, curlews, flinthead gannets, and many other kinds of aquatic birds I could not classify were disturbed

at my approach and flew hither and thither across the surface of the lake. I examined the water with the closest scrutiny, riding out in the shallow places where the rushes grew and beating about among them so that any unusual object must have been revealed to me. But I found nothing.

On the western side to which I now came, the land for about forty or fifty yards fell abruptly to the water, there being no flat bottom ground between. At this point the rushes ceased to grow.

I left my horse to graze in an adjacent part of the basin and, taking a hatchet from my belt, cut and trimmed a gallberry pole about twice the length of my body. Then I clambered upon the side of the bluff and lowered the pole, end downward, into the water. Fully half its length was submerged before it rested upon the mud at the bottom.

Just at this point I was interrupted by a prolonged, melancholy howl from Brutus.

The sound came over the hill above me and seemed to emanate from a point well back in the woods. I remembered that I had not seen the dog for ten minutes or more. "Brutus!" I called, "here, Brutus! here! here!" I waited, but he did not appear. I called again with the same result. Then I climbed to the top of the hill and looked around me; but the dog was nowhere in sight. I

was puzzled; for ordinarily he was tractable, and especially so with me. I advanced into the woods, stopping every now and then to whistle or shout. Presently I saw him sitting on his haunches among some scrub palmetto watching me with an apologetic, cowed expression. "Why, Brutus, here! here, old fellow!" I called coaxingly. But instead of obeying, he crouched lower, sniffing at some object that lay at his feet, and then, pointing his nose skyward, again sent forth that dismal howl.

"Bring it here, sir!" I commanded, sternly, advancing toward him.

He rose deliberately, gathered up the object in his mouth and, coming slowly to where I had paused to await him, laid it at my feet.

I stooped and picked it up. It was a light-coloured, plaid golf cap, very much soiled and in one place discoloured and stiffened by a great blotch of blood. On the faded blue silk lining was embroidered in white an "H," doubtless by Muriel's hand. I folded the cap and placed it carefully in the inside pocket of my hunting jacket. Then I went to the spot where Brutus had found it and began to look around in the bushes. I called to the dog to accompany me; but he did not stir from

where he lay flat on his belly in the sand, watching me with that mournful expression.

My search was without result. I reflected that the finding of the cap did not prove the murder had been committed in that place; for some animal, attracted by the blood upon it, might have carried it from the scene of the crime. Indeed, it presented a crumpled, torn appearance, as if it had been chewed upon. Nevertheless, I believed Hampton had met his death in that vicinity, and that his body had been dragged or carried by his slayer to the top of the bluff, whence it had been rolled down into the lake. Perhaps the murderer had attached a stone to accelerate its descent and to sink and hold it securely at the bottom.

I carefully examined the adjacent woods for some signs of a struggle, but nowhere did I find any. One heavy rain had fallen since my coming to the island, and probably that alone would obliterate any footprints. At any rate I could see none, nor any other indication of man's previous presence, though I searched long and diligently. At last, reluctantly giving up, I secured another long pole, this time leaving attached to the lower end several prongs to serve as grappling-hooks in the effort I was about to make to explore the bottom of the lake along the bluff.

I found that a difficult task. The ground was so steep I several times nearly slid off into the lake, being compelled to cling with one hand to the tall sedge grass throughout my soundings. Thus it may well be believed that with the other I found it no easy matter to manage the long, heavy pole in the deep water. However, I persevered for several hours, though never with much hope of success, since I realized that, even had the corpse been weighted down, as I supposed it had, the prodigious strength of the alligators that would come to feed upon it would suffice to carry it out into the lake. The utmost I could expect to find would be, perhaps, some tattered piece of clothing imbedded in the mud at the bottom of the lake; and even this I failed to bring up.

I was thoroughly exhausted by my efforts and sat down upon the bank, where I remained for some time recovering my strength. I had made at least one important discovery and I felt I could do no more on the present trip. It might be another time I could contrive a better apparatus for dragging the lake and conduct operations from a raft at a distance from the shore; but such efforts would require time and preparation and could hardly be made without attracting Carrington's attention.

However, I was determined to try again in some way.

I rose, caught my horse, leaped into the saddle and was about to start for camp when I happened to think of Brutus.

I called him, but, as he did not come, I rode around to the top of the bluff where I found him lying as I had left him several hours ago. I could not induce him to move. I dismounted, went to him, fondled him; then stepping off a few paces, tried to coax him to my side; but he remained crouched to the ground regarding me with a piteous look. I seized him by the collar and dragged him along; but as soon as I released my hold, he sank down and remained. Though I knew he would follow me in his own time, I did not like to leave him, but I was at last forced to do so. As far as I could see he lay still, watching me, but making no movement to come after.

The dog's behaviour strengthened my opinion that his master had met his fate in that vicinity. I firmly believed Brutus had witnessed the crime, and that his hatred of Carrington dated from that time. Now the memory of the tragedy revived by this visit to its scene and by the finding of the blood-stained relic, constrained him to remain at the fatal spot.

When I came within about a mile of camp it occurred to me that I should take back some game to serve as an explanation for my absence. A few moments before I had put up three or four turkeys which, after flying through the hummock for some distance, had disappeared over the brow of a hill directly in my course. I now dismounted, tied my horse, crawled cautiously as near to the top of the hill as I felt was safe and attempted to call them. Apparently they had gone farther than I supposed, for there was no response. However, as I was yet a little tired from my exertions, I decided to wait and repeat my call at intervals, hoping that the turkeys might wander back within hearing and then within sight. I looked back at my horse. He was standing contentedly under the liveoak where I had hitched him. The space behind me was almost bare of vegetation for a short distance; there was nothing but the white sand in which one's footfalls were muffled as he trudged along. I turned my eyes and again sought to lure the game; but, as it did not appear, my mind gradually became occupied with thinking over the results of my visit to the lake. I drew the cap from my pocket and examined it again.

Suddenly my conviction of the foul murder drove all thought of prudence from my mind. I

sprang to my feet and, holding the cap at arm's length, addressed it as if it were a living thing.

"You are powerful proof," I said, "but if you are not enough with what I have, I will get more; for before God I here vow not to rest till I have all necessary to convict the cowardly murderer of that sweet girl's father — that helpless old man, duped into unconsciously aiding him to escape the consequences of his other crimes!"

There was a short, dry cough behind me; I turned and faced Carrington, who stood within two yards of me, his countenance pale, his eyes blazing, and his shotgun held across his body, his right hand near the trigger.

CHAPTER XII

HOSTILITIES

I UNDERSTOOD the situation at once. Carrington, deceived by my call, had attempted to stalk the supposed game. Seeing my horse and thus discovering his mistake, he had continued his cautious advance to where I was plainly visible behind the bushes, in hopes of sharing in the sport when I had lured the turkeys within gunshot. Even had he exercised less care, my preoccupation and the character of the soft, bare ground over which he had passed would probably have prevented my hearing his approach. I knew he had heard and understood my indiscreet outburst, and therefore that concealment was no longer possible. There was to be war now, and war to the death!

Carrington had the advantage. My rifle was on the ground behind me, and to stoop would be to invite instant destruction; for there he stood with his finger on the trigger of his shotgun. Even if I could deprive him of his weapon, my chance of

conquering in a hand-to-hand struggle would be remote. Although I am a large and powerful man, I knew I would be no match for him. One or two little circumstances, however, were in my favour. One of these was my youth, which gave me more agility, and another was my skill as a boxer, in which art I had excelled in my college days. Ordinarily my cool head might have given me an advantage; for Carrington was a little likely to lose his temper, but of late the cold despair into which he had drifted, lent his character a quality not naturally belonging to it. Indeed, after the first shock of the discovery of my knowledge of his crime, he stood regarding me calmly, his features assuming a careless, sneering expresson. The tension was becoming painful and I broke it with words.

"Well, sir, you have overheard me make my vow." I uttered the sentence in a way to suggest the query: "What do you propose to do about it?" at the same time keeping a wary eye upon him, to enable me to meet a sudden attack. But, as if to show he meditated nothing of the kind, he lowered his gun to the hollow of his left arm and rested his right hand easily upon his hip.

"That is a very unfortunate habit of yours — that talking aloud to yourself," he said, scoffingly.

"You are the last person I know who ought to complain of it," I retorted, smiling grimly.

"I appreciate that fact." He motioned toward the cap in my hand. "An interesting object you have, and one to which, if I am to judge from your words, you attach some importance. May I ask what you intend to do with it?"

"Keep it as part of the evidence that will hang you," I said, deliberately returning the cap to my pocket and buttoning my jacket. "I thought you heard me announce that intention."

"A truly friendly one," sneered Carrington; "but one which I would not wager you will carry out. Besides, I fail to see what you could prove by that soiled rag, even supposing I were guilty of the crime with which you charge me; and the good God knows," he added, mockingly rolling his eyes upward, "that such is not the case."

"You blaspheming, murdering villain!" I burst out, but instantly checked myself, seeing the advantage my passion would give him and how ill I could afford to let him gain it.

"Beautiful compliment!" was his drawling comment; "and it makes so clear too the value of the evidence I called in question!"

It was plainly his wish to learn what proof I held against him, and I saw no reason why I

should not tell him, now that he understood my position.

"When we have pointed to a bullet-hole in the skull of your victim's horse, when we have robbed the lake of its secrets near the western bluff, then, perhaps, you will better understand the importance of *this* link in the chain." I touched my hand on my coat over the pocket where I had placed the cap.

He looked at me fixedly. "Where did you learn about the lake?" he demanded.

"That is not pertinent," I replied; "the point is, I know."

"By God! you have played the spy upon a dying woman!" He jerked the gun around in front of him and clutched the stock with his right hand. I stood still, but I was ready. After glaring at me for a moment, however, he seemed to alter his intention and allowed his strained grip on the weapon to relax. Then I spoke.

"I am not guilty of the baseness of which you accuse me," I said. "I was in your hut to do you and yours all the good in my power. What I heard there, I made no attempt to hear — I could not avoid hearing it. But since the knowledge has come into my possession, I deem myself justified

in using it for the conviction of a criminal, no matter how it was obtained."

"Oh, well! the lake has yielded no secrets as yet," said Carrington, easily. "It is one thing to make accusations and another to have proof to support them. That! for all you have." He snapped his fingers contemptuously. "That bloody cap proves nothing, and as for the horse, Hampton might have shot him as you did yours — to put him out of his suffering after he fell exhausted — before he himself perished in the swamp. And then, my dear Lindsay, juries get into an awkward habit of considering the motives which may prompt an act. Now what cause, what possible cause, could I have in doing violence to my good friend, Hampton?"

"Self-preservation; since he threatened to hand Mr. Sanford over to the authorities for defrauding the Inter-State Investment Company of Chicago," I replied boldly.

"How in hell — ?" He stood astounded, mutely staring his query.

"Oh! I don't mind telling you," I said carelessly. "I have the story in the paper that your victim brought to the island; that you took from him when you murdered him and threw his body into the lake; that the woman you called your wife

discovered when you had neglected to destroy it, getting from it her knowledge of your crime; that you afterward kept locked in the satchel with the money you purloined from your employers — "

"And that — damn you! —you came into my shack to steal under the pretext of practicing your quackeries!" he almost shrieked.

"You are mistaken," I said calmly. "You dropped it outside the door; the wind blew it into the hummock and I found it there."

"You shall give it back to me!" he cried in a fury.

"Never!" was my firm reply.

For an instant I thought the time had come. His rage was fearful. His eyes were literally on fire, his lips were drawn back revealing his teeth, actually, his hair seemed to bristle! It was not easy to retain one's composure in the face of such an exhibition, but, by remembering the advantage it would give me, I succeeded. I kept a watchful eye upon him, neither advancing nor retreating, though he twice made as if to bring his gun into position. I was so close that I counted upon seizing the barrel if he did so, before he could take aim. Seeing me calm, he strove to control his own passion. It was several minutes before he suc-

ceeded, and during that time neither of us spoke. It was he who broke the silence.

"I suppose we might as well come to a perfect understanding now," he said in a low, tense voice.

"Just as well," I assented.

"Suppose," he said after a slight pause, "suppose I were to admit my guilt; what would you do about it?"

"That appears to me an unnecessary question. I am convinced of your guilt without your admitting it and I have already told you I intend to denounce you."

"To whom — to the daughter of my supposed victim?" He was sneering, but I saw the idea made him quail.

"God forbid!" I answered; "she shall know nothing from me as long as we three must remain upon the island together."

"Very considerate of you!" he said, mockingly; nevertheless his great relief was apparent. "But really I can't guess whom you will take into your confidence unless it be the alligators in the swamps."

"The authorities at Miami will be the first to hear my story."

"Oh! Then you are counting on our going there together."

"Certainly. We will all leave the island at the same time."

"And that, no doubt, will be when Dudley Hampton comes to pilot us through the swamps?"

"Exactly."

"Let me see," he mused; "that will hardly be sooner than two months from the present date. We were to remain three months on the island; we have been here a little over one and a half. Dudley will scarcely become alarmed until we have overstayed the limit a week or more; then we must allow him time to get here. We need not expect him before the middle of May."

"That is the way I figure it," I said.

"Well, suppose meantime I take a notion to leave the island?"

"You will find leaving difficult."

"But not impossible."

"Yes, if I can make it so."

"Oh! I'm not taking you into my calculations."

"You had better."

He looked at me curiously.

"Lindsay, you're a bold fellow."

"It requires little courage to defy a cowardly murderer."

"Oh, come! you know the odds are against you. After all, why need I leave the island? If I choose

to secure myself by dealing with you as you accuse me of dealing with another who threatened exposure, what is to prevent?"

"The fact that you are not now opposed by a helpless, old man," I retorted.

"Why, you are absolutely defenceless at this moment," he declared, ostentatiously fingering his gun.

"Attempt any violence and you will learn differently."

He regarded me for fully a minute in silence.

"Damn you! I like your pluck," was his frank observation. "But let me tell you: you are dealing with a desperate man."

"And you with a determined man."

"Say rather with a foolish one. It ought to be plain by this time that I prefer not to hurt you; and yet, if you persist in interfering with my plans, what resource is left me?"

"Your plans are then formed?"

"Quite. To say the truth, this incident has matured them."

"You will try to escape from the island?"

"No, I will escape."

"Beg pardon; but, setting aside the question of possible hindrance from me, how will you get away?"

"I have no ties to hold me now; there is nothing to keep me from taking risks. Then, when I find the passage, which I will do, I will hardly return to guide you out, but will go straight on to Miami and — safety!"

"Taking the little satchel and its contents, of course?"

"Oh, unquestionably! I would not stir without that. Please note I tell you everything — everything but my final destination. That I keep a secret; for really, I must leave you something to think about."

"Thanks; but your care is unnecessary, since you are not going to leave."

"No? It is a pity we cannot agree about that. Now, I had fixed upon to-morrow for my departure, and am inclined to think I must insist."

He laughed lightly, evidently to put me off my guard; for I saw his hand creeping stealthily along the stock of his gun toward the trigger.

"We shall see," I replied in a tone resembling his own, while, as quietly as possible, I got myself into positon for a forward spring.

"Two other articles beside the satchel I should like to take, merely as a precautionary measure. I refer to the cap and newspaper. I think in time I

can persuade you to give them to me; otherwise — Throw up your hands!"

He leaped back, jerking the muzzle of the gun in line with my breast. But I was too quick for him. I swung my body aside and forward. With my left fore-arm I hit the barrel of the gun with such violence as to knock the weapon from his grasp and send it flying through the air. It struck the ground four or five yards from where we stood, and almost before it lit, I had sprung back to seize my Winchester, which was nearer. But I was given no time to get my hand upon it. With an oath, Carrington was upon me. I whirled around and sent my left at his face; then, as he suddenly checked his onset, bent back his body and threw up both arms to ward off the blow, I drove my right with all my force squarely into the pit of his stomach.

He gasped, doubled up and staggered back a pace, his features writhing in anguish. I thought he was done for; but in an instant he partly recovered and came at me again. I planted myself firmly with my feet wide apart, meeting him with a wicked swing that landed full on the point of the jaw, and down he went, his limbs all aquiver.

There was no time to lose, so quickly I bent over his unconscious form and searched his pockets for

what I knew was there and what I must have, if my plans for keeping him on the island were to succeed. I was not disappointed — I secured it. I rose, swung the Winchester on my shoulder by the strap, caught up Carrington's gun from the ground and ran down the hill to my horse.

By the time I had mounted and ridden back, Carrington had come to. He was sitting up and looking around, dazed. But as his eye fell upon me, it was evident he remembered.

"My dear Mr. Carrington," I said, "we confidently expect you to sup with us to-night at the camp, and you will pardon me if I ride on in advance to arrange for your suitable entertainment. As you appear weary, it gives me pleasure to relieve you of your gun; you can make your way through the hummock easier without it. We will give you a cordial welcome, and I hope you will like our company; for my conviction that we are to have the happy privilege of entertaining you till Dudley comes remains unshaken. Au revoir."

Without waiting for a reply, I rode off, leaving him sitting upon the ground. When I got beyond his sight, I drove the spurs into my horse and went plunging through the hummock at a rate that imperilled the necks of both. If Carrington came

straight to camp, he would reach there in little more than half an hour. Meantime there was much I must do before his arrival, if I was to hope for success.

CHAPTER XIII

I CHANGE MY QUARTERS

CARRINGTON did not reach camp as soon as I expected; nevertheless, I was unable to carry out all my plans before his arrival owing to an unfortunate stumble of my horse about half a mile from our destination. While going at full speed, he tripped on a creeper and fell, sending me flying over his head. I struck the ground with great violence and lay stunned. When I came too, I discovered that my ankle, previously hurt in a similar accident, was wrenched again, not badly, but enough to interfere with my rapid progress on foot; and that fact was more annoying because my horse had suffered a worse sprain, being, indeed, totally unable to proceed. I left him and made such speed as I could, regardless of the pain the effort cost me.

When I reached camp, Muriel was not in sight. Without delay I entered Carrington's shack, unlocked the trunk with the key I had taken from his person, took out the satchel containing the money,

ascertained it was locked and that a second key on the ring to which was attached the key to the trunk, fitted it, and with that in my hand for which Carrington had risked liberty and taken the life of a fellow being, I limped hurriedly out of the door, unexpectedly coming face to face with Muriel.

"Why, Mr. Lindsay, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," I said, struggling to appear composed; "nothing at all."

She looked at me doubtfully, one swift glance resting an instant on the satchel. "But your haste? and you seem to have had an accident?"

"Another fall from my horse," I explained; "my ankle had not entirely got well of the first sprain."

Even while I was speaking I changed my plan. Originally I intended to conceal the satchel in the hummock, which I believed I could do with little or no risk of Carrington's finding it; but now I realized that for the present at least I could not hope to accomplish this. I had to face the situation as it was and my resolution was quickly taken.

"Miss Hampton," I said, holding up the satchel, "will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly," she replied, regarding me with wonder.

"I have agreed to take charge of this for Car-

rington. I think the sight of it has an unhappy effect upon him."

Muriel's countenance expressed compassion, as she took the satchel from my hand. "I think I understand," she said. "It belonged to his wife; I have seen her often with it, and I believe it contains some of her treasured possessions, as she was very solicitous in her care of it."

"Likely enough," I agreed; "Carrington did not tell me what was in it."

Muriel sighed. "Poor man! let him be what he may, his love for his wife was sincere and beautiful, and I understand too well what pain such a reminder can cause him; and yet," she added thoughtfully, "in my case I want to keep everything like this near me."

"We do not all think or act alike under similar afflictions," I said rather hastily.

"That is true," she assented. "Well, I will place this where he will not be distressed by seeing it." She turned to go.

"And where it will be safe, of course," was my anxious suggestion.

"Certainly, though we know there are no thieves on the island. I will lock it in my trunk."

"Do, if you please," I said, "since both Carrington and his wife seemed to attach such value to it. I

may talk with you again about it and meantime, of course, you will not mention the subject to Carrington?"

"No indeed," she smilingly promised, and entered her shack with the satchel.

I hobbled back to Carrington's hut, shut and locked his trunk and began eagerly to search among his other possessions for a screw-driver. While I was thus engaged a slight noise at the door caused me to turn quickly with my hand at my hip-pocket, where I had placed the revolver I took from Carrington when I secured his keys. Brutus stood soberly regarding me and wagging his tail.

"Here, old fellow!" I called; and he came to my side. I patted him on the head and spoke a kind word to him; and, after looking at me in a manner to show his intelligent, grateful appreciation, he stalked solemnly back to the door and lay down across the threshold.

I resumed my hunt for the screw-driver and presently found it. I quickly seized the shotgun and removed both locks, placing them in my pocket with the cap and newspaper. I picked up the Winchester and was about to render it equally harmless, when Brutus lifted his head from between his paws and uttered a low growl. I knew it was Carrington, at whose approach the dog always showed

his antipathy. I placed the rifle, from which I had drawn the loads, on the couch beside me and took the pistol from my pocket, just as Carrington appeared outside the door.

"Come in," I said, carelessly; then to the dog: "Down, Brutus! down!"

My enemy entered, the dog sullenly retiring before him to the opposite side of the shack, whence he continued to give vent to an occasional, half-stifled growl, eying the intruder askance. Carrington did not show mortification or chagrin over his defeat. On the contrary he was smiling good-humouredly, and, after looking me over from head to foot with a blending of curiosity, and, I think, something of admiration, he laughed pleasantly, as he nodded toward the weapon in my hand.

"Prepared for me, as you promised, I see."

"In that way, yes."

"Do you purpose to sit there day and night for two months?"

"Hardly; it will not be necessary."

"I agree with you, since I came to propose a truce."

"Until you have the drop again?"

He laughed a second time. "One may be too suspicious."

"Not of you. And I may as well tell you that

all proposals for peace must come from me."

"As long as you have the upper hand, of course?"

"That will be all the time."

"I think differently. But while you have it, I must exhibit due humility. Any orders?"

"You might get supper."

"Shall be delighted!" He rose from the stool on which he had seated himself a moment before. "Any special dish your Highness would relish?"

"I'm not particular to-night. The larder is at your disposal; you may use your own discretion."

"A thousand thanks for the privilege!" He bowed with mock ceremony and left the hut laughing, not in scorn or derision, I thought, but in genuine amusement.

I completed my work upon the Winchester. Then I tore up the couch that had been occupied by the woman and, taking some of the pine boughs at the bottom of it, constructed with the lower parts of them in the aperture that served as a window a sort of lattice so that any tampering would cause the whole to fall with considerable noise. The lattice did not interfere with the working of the oilcloth curtain, which I allowed to remain. Having completed this task, I sat down to meditate upon the situation.

Though I had talked so confidently to Carrington, I must admit that, when I came calmly to think of the difficulties to be encountered in keeping him on the island, I was filled with misgivings. I had the upper hand, but could I keep it for two months? It was plain that my opponent was desperate and, since the death of the woman, careless of his life. Therefore he could not be awed with threats.

He must find the outlet from the island and he must secure the satchel. I did not believe he would try to escape without the contents of the satchel till the time for Dudley's coming drew near. The money was necessary for his flight and to provide for his future. I decided not to interfere with his search for the channel.

I did not believe he could find it. I knew the difficulties. I had failed, and he too in previous efforts. However, I was not counting upon his ill-success now, but upon his unwillingness to leave the money behind unless forced by too imminent danger. My chief care, therefore, was to keep the satchel securely hid and my foe unarmed.

The first task I was sure I could accomplish. Once I could carry out my original intention and bury the money in the hummock, there was scarcely a possibility of Carrington's finding it. That of course would lead to a crisis, and unless I was able

also to keep weapons out of my enemy's hands, the outcome would be doubtful.

If Carrington did not find the outlet, the necessity of destroying me to provide for his safety was apparent; I had told him I would denounce him when help came. If he found the outlet and not the money, I might expect him to slip quietly away when the danger of Dudley's arrival became pressing.

How could I know when he might decide to leave, and thus prevent his departure? But for the present I would not worry about that question, since, hoping to get the satchel, he would remain as long as he safely could.

If it came to stopping him, I must use violence. I knew the man's temper too well to suppose anything else. Though he was a murderer whose life was justly the forfeit of his crime, I was reluctant to kill or seriously injure him. But I would hesitate at nothing to keep him on the island; he should have fair warning and then — his blood be on his own head.

Unceasing vigilance must be the price of my success. My foe would be ever alert to reverse our positions. Yet, if he were successful, I did not greatly fear harm from him unless I sought to interfere with his departure or he should find

departure impossible. Then indeed I could expect no mercy. If forced to await the rescuers, he would deceive Muriel and them with some such story as he had invented to account for his first victim's absence.

My musings were broken into by the voice of Carrington.

"Your Highness, the flapjacks await you."

He was talkative and cheerful at the meal, which Muriel noted with evident surprise. In her manner toward him appeared something like resentment, which I wondered at, since it was new. Carrington and I were careful to conceal from her the change in our relations. Contrary to her custom, when we rose from the table, she bade us good-night and went at once to her shack.

I left to Carrington the task of cleaning up, and, telling him I wanted to see him at the other hut when he had finished, I took a few bits of bread and meat for Brutus and made my way thither with the dog at my heels. I lit a candle and placed it on a shelf against the wall. Presently Carrington came, pausing at the door.

"I suppose I may enter?"

"Certainly. We are about to move your property to the provision tent."

"And why, if I may ask?"

"We exchange quarters. You will be fully as

comfortable there, and I find the shack suits me better."

"Then say no more, my dear sir." He advanced to the trunk. "Shall we begin with this?"

"As you please. Allow me to present you with the key."

"Thanks." He laughed as he took it.

After we had removed the trunk and some of his other possessions, he started to pick up the medicine chest.

"You may leave that, if you please," I commanded.

"What? afraid of arsenic in your coffee?"

"Such a mistake might occur; it is best to guard against it."

"Just as you say. I believe, then, there is nothing to take." He moved lightly toward the door.

"One moment, Carrington."

"Certainly."

"I want to impress one thing upon you. I have said I intend to keep you on this island. I want you to understand I will hesitate at no means that may be necessary to do so. I make no idle threats. You are a murderer trying to escape justice. To prevent your doing so I will shoot you if you force me to it."

"I believe you," he said without show of resentment.

"Then that is enough."

"But I will not give you the opportunity for a day or two at least."

"I did not suppose that you would," I answered, reflecting his smile.

"Good night," he said, pleasantly.

"Good night."

After he was gone I moved the pallet, which I intended to occupy, where it could not be reached by a missile from the door or window. Then by way of extra precaution, I placed the guns, which I had rendered useless, on the far side of the pallet next the wall, where an intruder must disturb me to secure them. The loaded revolver I put under my head. By the dim light of the candle, Brutus, lying in the centre of the hut watched my preparations. I got a rope, fastened it to his collar, and, leading him to the door, tied him there, arranging a saddle-blanket for his bed. I knew the dog would give the alarm at the approach of Carrington and fortunately I was a light sleeper and would hear. I blew out the candle and without removing my clothes, stretched myself upon the pallet.

It was several hours before I went to sleep and then my rest was broken. I was in the jungle with

Carrington, and his gun again was pointed at my breast. This time he pressed the trigger and the sound of the shot rang out.

I started up in bed. It was broad daylight. Was it imagination, or had I actually heard the crack of a rifle? Even as I asked myself, a second report sounded from the hummock. I felt beside me on the pallet; both guns were there.

I leaped to my feet, dashed from the shack and looked in every direction; but could see nothing. Neither Carrington nor Muriel was visible. It was a little before Muriel's time for rising. Brutus yelped and tugged at his rope, looking toward the hammock in the east. I started in that direction, crossed the open space and had almost reached the brush when the bushes shook directly in front of me and Carrington stepped forth not ten yards distant.

"Good morning," he said good-humouredly. "I thought your Highness might like a change in your bill of fare, and while you slumbered peacefully I have provided it."

He had a doe swung over his shoulder and in his right hand he carried a Winchester.

CHAPTER XIV

OUTWITTED

I WAS defenceless. In my haste I had left the revolver on my pallet in the shack. But Carrington showed no disposition to use his advantage. He seemed content with enjoying the surprise I could not help showing at seeing him unexpectedly armed.

"I observe you are interested in this," he said, smilingly indicating the weapon with a nod and a downward glance. "It is similar to the one I had the honour to lend you. My friend, Hampton, had guns of other makes, but brought this in preference, because we could use the same sort of ammunition."

"Oh! I understand. And this gun, no doubt, you took when you murdered the owner and threw his body into the lake."

"You're mistaken," he answered with perfect composure; "each brought a shotgun also, and we carried those weapons on that agreeable little excursion. Perhaps." he added, carelessly, "perhaps, if your dragging operations are thorough, you may discover the one which belonged to my friend."

"Thanks for the hint. You may depend upon my exercising due care, if, after all, it is necessary to search the lake."

"Search or don't search; it's all one to me. I have a suggestion to make more to the point: Suppose we return to camp and have some breakfast?"

"Agreed. Do you need help with your load?"

"Of course you would gladly carry the rifle?"

"I meant to assist you with the doe. The rifle I will relieve you of later."

We had taken a step or two; he stopped, stared hard at me and burst into a laugh. "I admire your self-confidence."

"In this instance you will not find it misplaced."

"We shall see. But I don't need your aid." So saying he strode easily along, the doe across his shoulder, the Winchester in his hand. Both of us realized that hostilities were not now to be thought of; Muriel had come out of her shack and was observing us from a distance.

While I kindled a fire and made the biscuits, Carrington dressed the doe, his rifle strapped to his back. When we sat down to the meal, he did not remove it. The circumstance attracted Muriel's notice and I saw her observing him curiously.

"Are you going into the hummock again after breakfast, Mr. Carrington?" she presently asked.

"Yes," he answered, pleasantly. "I am thinking of taking a hunt in the southern part of the island." He cast a sidelong glance at me.

"I wish you success," was my careless comment. I knew he was about to begin his search for the outlet; "but," said I to myself, "even granting he finds it, he will not leave without the satchel which is now securely locked in Muriel's trunk."

"Thank you," said Carrington in response to my audible remark. "I thought you might care to join me and look after me a little; for you know I'm not famous for being a good woodman."

"Sorry my ankle will prevent. But you'll come back all right — no fear about that," I assured him, lightly.

He laughed. "Bad penny, eh? Well, if you will excuse me, I'll be off to catch my horse." He rose, bowed politely, and made his way toward the strip of prairie where the horses were at pasture.

"He is a strange man," breathed Muriel, as her intent gaze followed him. "Did you ever see such a sudden change in one? He seems in the best of spirits."

"Yes," I assented absently, my own eyes fixed upon Carrington's retreating form. Suddenly I scrambled to my feet. "Pardon me, I think he wants something I have."

Carrington had turned abruptly from his course and entered the shack where I had passed the night, roughly thrusting aside Brutus who made a show of opposing him.

As may well be believed, I lost no time in covering the intervening ground; but before I could reach the door, Carrington issued forth.

"Merely dropped in to note what changes you had made," he said with a taunting smile. "Too bad you've inconvenienced yourself by your haste; good bye."

"Au revoir, you mean," I called after him.

"Oh! I don't know about that," he laughed.

I entered the hut and looked around. The guns and pistol lay as I had left them. Apparently nothing had been disturbed. I made a careful investigation and did at last miss one article — a large bottle of liniment. The other contents of the medicine chest had not been touched, as far as I could see. The liniment I had used with excellent results when I suffered my first sprain, and I decided Carrington had taken it to prevent my employing it again, to put myself in better condition to interfere with his explorations. However, if that was the case, his trouble was for nothing; for there were other available remedies, one of which I made use of immediately. While thus employed, I glanced

through the window and saw Carrington riding off.

Muriel was busy with the dishes, and I took advantage of her occupation to remove all the poisonous contents of the medicine chest and bury them in the hummock. I marked the spot carefully; for future illness might make some of them necessary.

I called the horses, caught one and rode out to see what had become of my disabled mount. I knew he was badly crippled, but supposed he would have made his way to camp during the night. I hunted for him two hours in the neighbourhood where he had sustained his injury. The jungle was very thick thereabouts — in spots quite impenetrable; I thought he might have fallen where I could not see him. I called, but he gave no signs by whinnying. The borders of the swamp were near, and I began to think he might have strayed out into the mud and water, got down, and, unable to rise, so perished. At last, as I could not discover him, I was forced to adopt that conclusion, though I thought it strange, if he could move at all, he had not come to camp. We were now left with only four horses, including the one upon which Carrington had begun his quest.

When I returned to camp, I found Muriel in

deep thought seated in the shade before her hut. The book she had been reading lay neglected upon the sand. She looked up with undisguised pleasure at my approach.

"Oh! I am glad you have come. I was lonesome and depressed, and I feared you had changed your mind and joined Mr. Carrington to be absent all day."

With a quickening pulse I seated myself near her, my back against a tree. "I will not leave camp again to-day."

"You should not," she said, anxiously; "your ankle needs rest."

"I have bandaged it; it is much better."

"Mr. Lindsay," she said timidly, "I want to ask a question."

"I will be glad to answer it if I can," was my cordial assurance.

"Have I said or done anything to hurt your feelings?"

I regarded her in astonishment. "How can you suppose such a thing? Most certainly you have not."

She looked earnestly into my countenance. "Then I believe you," she declared, smiling, "and, if you don't mind, we'll say no more about it."

"But —" I began, involuntarily, and, checking

myself, turned my puzzled looks on the ground.

"This is not treating you fairly," she admitted; "I will explain."

"Oh, no!" I begged her.

"Yes," she insisted, "it is right I should." After a pause: "I fancied I could see a change in you — that you avoided me."

I sat silent, confused. She was right — of late I had held aloof; but I had not supposed she would notice, — and if she only had known the cause!"

"Mr. Lindsay, I am only a weak girl who has lost a dear father under most unusual and distressing circumstances. Think of my situation here, and you can forgive my being unreasonable, I know. You have seemed to understand so well; to be so deeply, truly sympathetic, and your sympathy has been so helpful, so — so indispensable! I am sure you have not withdrawn it, but —

"Neither that nor my admiration!" I burst out, impulsively. "I wish I could prove to you how sincere are both!"

She regarded me gravely. "Thank you; it is not necessary — I believe you."

I was abashed at my vehemence and lowered my eye as I felt the blood in my face.

"It was my selfishness," she declared. "I forgot you have troubles of your own."

"They are more numerous and serious than you think," I murmured; "but they would be a poor excuse to offer for forgetting yours."

Her low tones were full of self-reproach. "It was inconsiderate, it was very inconsiderate of me. I am sorry, and here is my hand in token I will not again be so thoughtless." She leaned toward me, extending it. "Oh, Mr. Lindsay! I would not be so weak and foolish if I did not feel so utterly alone!"

"I know," I said gently; impulsively I raised her hand to my lips.

She seemed unconsciously to allow the caress. Then we both remembered. She drew her hand away and we sat embarrassed.

It has been impossibe to repeat every conversation between Muriel and me. They were many, sometimes, indeed, consisting of only a few words; but often we were days together. It was natural she should treat me as a friend of long standing. She knew of me through my enthusiastic friends, the Armstrongs, seeing me with their partial eyes.

In her desolation and sorrow I was the only one to whom she could turn and I was not unresponsive. She knew of my own recent bereavement and something too of that other cause that made me unhappy. Our situation on the island tended to

banish all conventionality, all reserve. We were what we seemed; our hearts lay open to each other.

In spite of myself I made a comparison. I had built an ideal, and she whom I had enthroned as a realization had proved mere tinsel; but now I saw the pure gold shaping itself into the glorious form of my abstraction.

Can words do Muriel justice? Ask those fortunate men who have sounded the depths of such hearts; they will tell you no. Then vainly would I labour to give a just impression of her character. Her goodness, her affection, her gentleness, her thoughtfulness for others, her tact, her exquisite taste, her intelligence and accomplishments, her great beauty of face and figure, the thrilling music of her voice — how could I tell of these? I will simply say she was one of heaven's fairest flowers blooming on earth to attract and save — a true, good woman; then some men at least will know.

If only I had found her before! Better now not to have found her at all. It was the unattainable held up to my envying gaze by a mocking fate through my precipitate folly.

I knew my peril and tried to evade it. I sought excuses to withdraw myself more and more from Muriel's society; now, unsuspecting, she herself had

defeated my purpose. She had become accustomed to lean upon me for support and comfort.

Forlorn as she was, could I deprive her of this aid? I asked myself now, as we sat together in front of the shack. It seemed cowardly, when that course was dictated by a wish to save myself pain. I resolved that hereafter I would devote every moment I could spare from watching Carrington and attending to necessary camp duties to making more cheerful for Muriel the many dark days that must pass before her brother came. The constant companionship meant danger for me alone, I thought; I never dreamed that she might fall in love with me!

Before seeking Muriel I had hid beneath the sand something besides the poisonous medicines. I wrote a brief but clear account of my discoveries concerning Carrington. I explained how he had learned of these, that we had defied each other, and that I had sworn to his face to see him punished. I stated that I wrote the letter to ensure his conviction for the murder of Hampton in case he should win in our contest. The letter I directed to Dudley Hampton and placed in a little tin box with the cap and newspaper. The box I tied securely and wrapped in heavy paper and then in several thicknesses of oil-cloth, placing Dudley's name on

the outside and adding "to be opened in the presence of a friend — not Carrington — before leaving the island." Then I buried it apart from the medicines.

I contrived to take Muriel to the spot where we sat and conversed for some time. Then I said gravely.

"Miss Hampton, do you know I had a weighty reason for directing our walk here?"

She looked up bewlldered.

"I want to make a request — to charge you with a commission."

"I will undertake it if I can," she replied.

"Thank you. We don't know what may happen to any of us before we leave this island. Already I have had several narrow escapes; I may run the same risks again and be less fortunate. There is a package buried here," I indicated the spot, "which in that case I will ask you to deliver into the proper hands."

I wanted her to think it some communication to Effie and plainly she did so.

"I will carry out your wish," she promised, solemnly.

I showed her how to locate the spot. "Let no hands but your brother's remove it, will you?"

"Mr. Carrington shall not know," she promised, quickly.

We returned to camp. The afternoon was far spent. Muriel commented upon Carrington's continued absence. Of course I did not tell her, but I supposed he might prosecute his search for the outlet as I had — by camping over night on the border of the swamp. She asked whether I had noticed any change in her manner toward him.

"I thought it evinced something of displeasure last night."

"You have a quick eye," she answered, smiling. "Do you recall my saying when you brought the satchel that in my own case I wanted such relics near me?"

"Distinctly."

"You had scarcely left me when Mr. Carrington came and asked to borrow father's rifle. I let him understand my reluctance; but he said I was foolish to feel that way and almost took the gun out of my hands. I tried, but apparently could not conceal, from you at least, that I was indignant. And after that I was not surprised when he asked for the satchel."

"What?" I gasped, staring.

"Plainly he has changed his mind overnight."

"He took it then — the satchel?"

"Oh, yes; and seemed not at all affected by the sight of it. Evidently he is resolved to practice what he preached to me — studied indifference. A sudden change considering his request to you."

"Very," I assented, absently.

Outwitted! Doubtless my adversary had seen me, from the border of the hummock, give Muriel the satchel, and knowing I could not have fully explained to her, had recovered it without much risk. The crisis had come and found my desperate foe on equal terms with me. Should I shrink from the contest and let him go? Never!

I knew he would never voluntarily return to camp. If unsuccessful in finding the channel at once, he would remain of nights where he could be off again into the swamps at the first trace of dawn.

My resolution was quickly taken. The sun was an hour high; I would face my foe if possible before it set.

When we met, one of us must die. Had I succeeded in keeping him unarmed, I would have shot to cripple; but now I could take no risk. It was his life or mine.

CHAPTER XV.

A NIGHT ALARM

I MUST leave Muriel alone at the camp. Perhaps I would never return; then she would be for months on the island alone with the murderer of her father and of myself. But I would save her from the knowledge of his crimes till help came. He or I would fall far out in the wilds, and the secret of our affray would be locked in the survivor's bosom. Muriel could be deceived as she had been about the fate of her father; Carrington was shrewd enough for that, and, if fate favoured me, I could manage.

As long as she was ignorant of his bloody deeds, I believed she was safe with Carrington. The woman we buried had loved Muriel, and Muriel had done her many kindnesses. Those circumstances alone would protect the girl from Carrington, who also had to remember the great wrong he had done her. Plainly, he felt the extent of that wrong and was not unremorseful. I had thought of all this before. At present I was puzzling over the problem of how to get away without exciting Muriel's sus-

picions. A happy thought struck me as we reached the shacks. I broke a long silence.

"I've been thinking I must leave you by yourself a little while," I said, gravely.

In surprise she quickly looked up, her eyes mutely asking the reason.

"I did not tell you Carrington has gone to search for the way from the island. I have tried it and know what risks he runs. He has not returned; something may have happened."

"You mean he may have become lost in the swamps?"

"Yes; or stuck in a quagmire."

She stood thoughtful for a moment; then shivered slightly. "You must go to him."

My heart smote me. "It seems like deserting you —"

"You must not think of that. I am in no danger; he is, and perhaps you can help him. Only —" She raised her lovely eyes in piteous, dumb appeal.

"Yes," I breathed in gentle encouragement.

"Do not leave me a solitary, helpless survivor on this horrible island. Oh, I should go mad! I should go mad!"

"No fear of that," I assured her, huskily; "one of us at least will return."

"One of you?" She calmed herself and looked

earnestly into my face. Then, apparently on the point of speaking, she seemed suddenly to change her mind, dropping her eyes, while a deeper pink stole into her cheeks and over her brow. Brutus came up and, seeking recognition, thrust his muzzle affectionately into her hand as it hung by her side.

"There!" I said in a light tone that cruelly belied my feelings, "you have a protector." I led Brutus to the door of her hut and fastened him there, deriving some real satisfaction from the act. He was only a dog, but I knew he would give his life, if need be, for Muriel. After a moment's hesitation, during which I went through a mighty struggle, I advanced cheerfully and held out my hand.

"I must be off. The sun is low. I will be back as soon as possible — I trust in an hour or two after his setting. Do not worry; for all will come out right."

"I will try to think so," she bravely answered. "May God protect you."

"And you!" I implored fervently. Then I let fall her hand, turned abruptly and entered my shack.

In a few minutes I had put the Winchester into condition for service, loaded and strapped it to my back and placed Carrington's revolver in a holster at my belt. Then I caught up a bridle, blanket, and surcingle — Carrington, of course, had taken the

saddle — and, without permitting myself a backward glance, made my way to where the horses were at pasture.

Mounting, I rode around the outskirts of the camp and plunged into the hummock toward the south. I caught a glimpse of Muriel at the door of her shack as I entered the brush. She was looking after me, and, when she saw she was observed, waved her hand encouragingly. I returned the salutation with a choking sensation in my throat. But in another instant my nerves became steady as I knew the time for action had come, and calmly I began to lay my plans, while urging my horse onward as fast as he could go.

I assumed Carrington would be expecting me. He was not a man to be taken unawares. He realized my determination to keep him on the island, and knew that I had hesitated to adopt extreme measures only because I was sure he would not go without the money until the time for Dudley's coming drew near. Now, however, he had secured it and doubtless knew that Muriel would tell me. Consequently he would look for immediate action on my part and be prepared to meet it.

When within a mile of the locality where Carrington believed the trail leading from the island

began, I dismounted and staked my horse. I did not want to take chances of his betraying my presence, and I reasoned that signs of recognition would pass between him and Carrington's mount when they came in proximity to each other. If I were on foot, my enemy's horse might detect my presence before his rider and by neighing give me information of his whereabouts. The sun was setting, but the light of the moon, well on in the first quarter, was more favourable to my purpose. Swiftly, stealthily I made my way along the border of the swamp, crouching low, and keeping well under the bushes, while I made frequent pauses with every sense alert to catch some clew to the whereabouts of my foe and to guard against surprise.

I have said that parts of the swamp were impenetrable. This was true of long stretches immediately north and south of the place to which I was going. Between these particular stretches, for perhaps several hundred yards along the borders of the swamp, vegetation was less dense, both on the land and in the water, and here under Carrington's instructions I had begun my own search for the trail. Of necessity he also would enter here, and, if baffled in his search and forced to return, would come out at the same point; unless, indeed, he got lost and

wandered back to dry land a mile or more to either side. Even in that event he must return to where I would post myself if he renewed his investigations in the morning.

When I reached the northern boundary of the entrance, the last trace of day had disappeared and only the dim, uncertain light of the moon, obscured in most places by the heavy foliage, remained. The frogs and owls had begun their usual, deafening serenade; but after a while one could distinguish any unusual noise in spite of the monotonous chant. With infinite caution I made my way to the centre of the stretch where the swamp could be entered, and there, securely hidden, I resolved to pass the night. I did not believe Carrington could enter or leave the swamp on either side of me without my hearing the splashing of his horse in the water. That would be the signal for action.

I tried to think of every course he could adopt. He might spend the first night in the swamp of some such islet as that where I had found Hampton's horse rather than run the risk of encountering me at the shore of the island; but should he do that, he must count upon resuming his explorations with his horse weakened from lack of forage and rest after a day of terrible exertion in the mud and water. His chances of success would

thus be materially lessened. The possibility that Carrington had found the passage on this first day's search was so remote it hardly entered into my calculations; and that he would find it the second day, if he started upon an exhausted horse, appeared equally improbable. Therefore, in the end he would be forced to come back to the island, and my vigil would only be lengthened. But I did not think he would pass a night in the swamp. I believed he had already left it; had ridden to a distance, where he now lay concealed; and that he calculated upon passing me in his reëntrance in the early morning after the moon had gone down. I had scarcely come to this conclusion when I heard a splashing that seemed to come from behind me.

I listened intently and strained my eyes, but could see nothing. It might be a deer or some other animal making his way through the water; I had noticed on several occasions that panther tracks were frequent on this part of the island — once I had seen one of the animals and often heard their cries. I soon discovered that whatever was making the noise was proceeding slowly toward the shore along the southern border of the entrance. I abandoned my position, and, keeping well in the shadow of the bushes with my hand on the lock of my rifle, made my way with all the haste consistent with

necessary caution toward where in my judgment the cause of the disturbance would strike land. But I had not taken a dozen steps before the splashing ceased and was followed by the thud of galloping hoofs upon the sand, the sound growing fainter.

I sprang up in time to see the shape of a mounted man dash across a glade lit by the moon and, making a sharp curve to the right, disappear again in the jungle. It was only a momentary glimpse. He was going at full speed; the place where he vanished was about one-hundred-and-fifty yards from where I stood.

I deliberated. If I resumed my post and waited for Carrington's return in the morning, he was likely to get past me again —for, indeed, he could approach with greater caution on the land; the darkness would be complete and my chance of interfering with his movements less in the swamp, once he gained it, than upon the shore of the island. On the other hand I could hardly hope to locate his camping place with a view to surprising him; for doubtless he would be watching for such a move and take pains to find a secure spot, perhaps riding several miles from where he came out of the swamp. That, however, was hardly necessary; for parts of the adjacent hummock were so densely covered with vegetation that man and horse could have

remained concealed within a dozen yards of me without discovery unless by accident or good fortune. Nevertheless, if I could surprise my foe as he lay asleep, my victory would be easy and complete. It was worth trying at any rate, though I must own I had little hope of success. I would cautiously explore the hummock until the moon went down, which was about midnight; then I would return, if unsuccessful, to the entrance of the swamp and, when Carrington came, take such means as seemed most likely to be effective in opposing his further efforts and bringing him to bay.

I started violently and whirled around with my rifle cocked at a sudden shrill cry, as of a woman in distress and mortal terror that came from the dark recesses of the cypress. Though an instant later I smiled at my alarm, for several moments my blood did not cease to run cold at each frequent repetition of the sound; for nobody who has not heard the panther's cry at night in the jungle can appreciate its chilling, depressing affect. As I lingered to give Carrington time to get settled for the night, that I might take him completely off guard, I heard the beast's call answered nearer to me, and presently I distinguished the rustling and crashing of the boughs as a heavy body swung from tree to tree. The cries continued at brief intervals, always be-

coming louder; no doubt both animals were approaching me. I shivered. I did not believe they would attack; but certainly it was not agreeable to have them in close proximity.

A commotion among the limbs of a tree not fifty feet away caused me to look up, and there I saw four gleaming eyes in the blackness.

Involuntarily I raised my rifle, but checked in time my impulse to fire. The report would apprise Carrington of my presence; it would be safer to take what risk was to be run with the beasts. For fifteen or twenty minutes I squatted on the ground, contenting myself with keeping a wary eye upon them and being ready to defend myself if need be. The panthers maintained their post, only stirring slightly now and then and occasionally giving utterance to their cry.

At last I rose and moved cautiously toward where I had seen Carrington disappear. In the open places in the hummock lit by the moon by close inspection I could make out the prints of his horse's hoofs. Perhaps from these I could run down my foe. But when I reached the point where he turned to the right and passed from my sight, I realized it would be a difficult if not impossible task; for he had plunged there into a narrow passage over which the trees met, so that it was as dark as a cave.

I am not ashamed to say I hesitated before entering it. I believe the thought of seeking a desperate man like Carrington in such a place and upon such an errand when he must have calculated upon my coming and might even now be sitting a few yards ahead with his weapon ready, would have quickened the pulses of most men. But I steeled myself for the effort, and, dropping upon my hands and knees so that, by holding my face close to the earth I could trace my course by the glimmer from the white sand, I began slowly to worm my way along the tortuous path. It was a track made by the game coming down to the swamp for water, and beyond question Carrington had located and explored it before entering the cypress. The bushes presented an impenetrable wall upon either side, as I learned by pressing gently against them as I advanced, being careful, however, not to agitate them to such an extent as to betray my presence. At no place was it possible for Carrington to diverge from this winding way; it was certain I was following upon his trail.

But I in turn was followed. I had forgotten the panthers until I once more heard their cry, sounding, apparently, from the entrance to the passage. In a few moments I heard it again, seemingly much nearer. I now began to be seriously apprehensive of

an attack and debated whether I ought not take measures for frightening the animals away. I decided to do so, remembering, however, that I must avoid alarming Carrington. I retraced my steps, maintaining a crouching attitude until, upon rounding a sharp curve, I saw those four glaring orbs ahead, where their owners lay close upon the ground not forty feet from me. Instinctively I started upright and uttered a low cry. The balls of green fire disappeared and there was a scampering and a snapping of dry twigs. I hurried forward, beating against the bushes with the barrel of my rifle and tossing a few sticks into the gloom. Then after waiting and hearing or seeing nothing of the beasts, I concluded I had rid myself of them, and turning, made my way back.

I had been in the hummock for perhaps an hour when I saw, through an opening in the passage before me, the moonlight upon the sand. I increased my vigilance as I drew near this termination of my leafy tunnel. Presently I found myself at its mouth, where it opened upon a clear, almost circular area of several acres. Here I was confronted by a new problem. I could again distinguish the tracks of Carrington's horse; they led straight across the open where I was afforded absolutely no cover in following. If my foe were on

watch, he could easily shoot me the instant I passed into the light. I determined to settle this difficulty by crawling around the border of the open, keeping close against the stems of the weeds and bushes, where I would be protected by the shadows of their over-hanging leaves. I suspected Carrington had ridden his horse into the most unprotected part of the moon-lit area as a subterfuge to draw me there, and that at some point before reaching the opposite side he had turned and again entered the hummock. At any rate I was sure to find the point of his entrance by making a complete circuit and carefully observing the ground. The event proved my reasoning correct; for I had not crept twenty paces along the northern edge of the clear space before I discovered the horse's tracks heading toward me and turning off into the jungle in a passage similar to that from which I had emerged. I entered, and when I had covered about fifteen yards of my silent advance, I found the wall of bushes on my right no longer existed; but I presently discovered it running almost at right angles to the passage I was pursuing. Not a ray of light penetrated the dense canopy of the trees; but I judged I was in one of those places where deer congregate during the heat of the day and where the ground is kept bare by the trampling of their feet. I felt my way across the

trail to learn whether this opening extended on that side also. Where the offset occurred on the right, the way had broadened till it was six feet in width.

My foot struck something that gave forth a metallic clink. I reached cautiously down and my heart gave a great bound as my hand touched a leathern strap. Continuing my stealthy investigations, I discovered a halter attached to a rope, the other end of which was fastened to a stout sapling. My enemy was there — perhaps within a dozen feet of me!

He had selected this forest recess as his camping place and had tied his horse across the entrance to intercept my advance and give the alarm, when, because of my defenceless position in the narrow way, he would have me at a disadvantage. It was a shrewd plan and had miscarried only because his horse had slipped the halter, while his exhausted rider slept. The animal had not passed out by the way I entered; for there were no tracks to show that. He either remained in the recess or had left by some other trail. Reasoning that he would be glad enough to rest so soon after his day of arduous labour in the swamp, I thought it likely he was there; though toward morning indeed he might be expected to stray off in an effort to make his way

back to camp. Now he might be lying down, too weary to take note of my presence.

I was not long in deciding what to do. Noiselessly I strapped the Winchester to my back, and, drawing the revolver from my holster, began to creep along the wall of bushes that ran out from the path on the right. At every move I half expected to put my outstretched hand upon the person of my desperate adversary, and my heart beat swiftly at the thought.

When I was four or five yards from the entrance to the alcove, I settled myself to wait. Eventually Carrington must make some move which would betray his whereabouts even if it did not come till he rose to resume his search in the morning; then my advantage was apparent. I could run no unnecessary risks, but I did not want to kill him if I could help it. If only I could deprive him of his rifle and the coveted satchel while he slept! This I thought barely possible. I would keep my ears alert to catch any sound he might make in his sleep, or in a moment of wakefulness; and, having located him thus, when his senses were buried in repose I would steal up and try to carry out my purpose without shedding his blood.

It all happened in an instant. As I sat intently

listening to catch the sound of Carrington's breathing, I heard instead a crashing in the brush at the mouth of the passage; then a more violent commotion and a terrified snort from the blackness ahead. Straightway the shrill, appalling cry of the panther sounded almost at my elbow; but before I could do more than scramble to my feet, a rifle flamed three times in rapid succession from a point to the left of the passage and I heard the intruders making a precipitate retreat.

"Whoa, Duke, whoa!"

I heard the thud of the gun as Carrington dropped it and advanced to catch and pacify his horse, which no doubt he supposed had broken loose at this sudden alarm. Now was my opportunity. As quickly and noiselessly as I could, I advanced to where I had seen the flashes, stumbling over the rifle and securing it as I went. I groped around in the darkness, and presently my hand encountered the moss of which Carrington had made his bed. It was with difficulty I repressed a shout of exultation as my grasp closed upon the handle of the satchel. Swiftly I made my way with my prizes to the passage. The sounds behind told that Carrington had caught the horse and was about to fasten him again at the entrance to the

alcove. In another moment my foe would discover his loss.

I entered the open, dashed across it and plunged into the inky blackness of the way that would lead me out upon the border of the swamp.

CHAPTER XVI

I TAKE NO CHANCES

It was a foolish thing to enter that cave-like passage; I realized it before I had gone fifty yards. While my progress was more rapid than it had been in the opposite direction, because it need not now be noiseless, it was yet very slow; for, as before, I had to trace my way by the sheen of the sand. What if Carrington, mounted on his horse, should give chase? The thought had hardly suggested itself when I heard the muffled, rapid beat of hoofs in my rear.

My foe was unarmed I knew, but utterly desperate. He cared nothing for his life and only for vengeance. His purpose was to ride me down in the narrow way, and how was I to escape? I could not reach the exit toward which my face was turned before he overtook me; for the horse could see his way better than I, and Carrington was compelling him to a reckless speed. The path was so narrow and the growth of thorny bushes on either side so stiff and dense that I could not force my way into

them and thus allow him to pass. To check his onset with a bullet was my only course, and then I must fire at random in the dark and might miss entirely. My adversary was very near me; I heard the curses and blows with which he urged on his horse.

Dropping the satchel I cocked and presented the Winchester. "Halt!" I shouted, "halt! or I fire!"

"Damn you! you shall go to hell with me!" roared Carrington.

They were almost upon me. I held the weapon low and shot twice.

There was the sound of a frantic plunging among the brush mingled with torrent of furious imprecations, then the heavy crash of a falling body followed by the noise of a desperate struggle as the stricken steed strove vainly to regain his feet. A succession of short, quick gasps growing fainter, an occasional rustling of the leaves and all was still.

"Carrington!" I called.

There was no response.

"Carrington! Are you hurt?"

I thought I heard him creeping toward me, and cocking my rifle, held it ready. I was no match for him in a hand to hand struggle. If he attacked me I could show him no mercy. I waited for fully a minute, but he did not come. I decided my ears had deceived me.

"Carrington!" I shouted again.

Perhaps he was too sullen to answer. It might be his fall with the horse had rendered him unconscious; possibly he was pinned to the ground by the animal's weight.

I retired several paces and laid the satchel and the gun on the sand. Then I drew the revolver, cocked it and cautiously retraced my steps. After listening intently a moment and hearing no sound, I lit a match with my left hand and held it in front and a little to one side of me.

The carcass of the horse blocked the trail, being doubled up grotesquely by the narrowness of the space in which it lay. On his shoulder sat Carrington cross-legged and with an air of as much ease and unconcern as if he had just settled himself for a comfortable smoke. He laughed and saluted me with a wave of the hand; I noticed it was his left.

"Cleverly done, Lindsay; you're the right metal."

"Are you injured?" I asked, curiously.

He seized his right arm and bent it, showing it had been snapped above the elbow.

"Why didn't you finish me; why don't you do it now?" he demanded with perfect coolness. "I expected you to do it."

The match flickered and went out.

"I leave that to the hangman," I said.

"Well, if you weren't a thoroughly brave man, you'd do it," he commented, carelessly. "Hangman? bosh!" and he laughed contemptuously.

I lit another match as I heard him getting to his feet. Then I felt in my pocket and securing all I had except two or three, advanced and held them out to him.

"I appoint you torch-bearer. You will light these as becomes necessary to show us the way out."

He took them without protest, and I stepped back where the horse had mashed down the bushes in his fall and motioned for Carrington to precede me.

"Let us lose no time," I said. "I will dress your arm when we reach camp."

"You are too good," he sneered.

We advanced, he in front, a lighted match held above his head; I close behind, my revolver ready. When he reached the place where the gun and satchel lay, the match had almost burned out.

I saw him hesitate.

"Light another and move on," I commanded, sternly.

Suddenly he dropped the match, and, as it went out, I saw him stoop to seize the rifle.

"By God! I'll make you kill me! It's you or I now —"

The words ended in an explosive gasp. I was close behind him and sent him sprawling with a vigorous push.

But he was up almost instantly and we grappled in the darkness. It was well for me his right arm hung limp by his side! As it was, I could not tear myself free of his grasp. His uninjured arm was around my neck and he was trying to trip and throw me under him. My right hand, holding the revolver, was pressed between our bodies and I could not get it free to use. I tried to beat him off with my left; but was too close to deal an effective blow. Then I strove to break his hold. We struggled and panted, reeling from side to side of the narrow passage and falling against the wall of bushes. At last I managed to change the pistol to my left hand, and with the butt of it I dealt Carrington a succession of stunning blows upon the head. His muscles seemed to wilt; he relaxed his grasp and sank to the ground.

Lighting one of the matches I had reserved, I made a hasty examination, satisfying myself he was only stunned and that he would soon come to. Then, taking up the gun and satchel, I made my way out to the open on the border of the swamp. There I sat down in the moon-light, where, however, I was screened from his sight emerging from

the trail, and removed the remaining loads from the Winchester. My own, or rather the one which really was Carrington's, had remained all the time strapped to my back.

Presently I heard Carrington call from the hummock.

"Lindsay!"

I remained silent.

"Lindsay, I give up; come help me out!"

I knew he was able to get out by himself and I did not intend to trust myself with him in that dark passage again; so I made no response.

In a little while I heard him shuffling along the winding way and directly he stepped out into the light. Then I rose and addressed him.

"Carrington."

"The devil! I thought you were gone."

"No, I waited for you."

"That was kind."

"Listen to me: I have you in the light now and we will go to camp together. You must not come nearer to me than you now stand."

"On penalty of death?" he sneered, and made a forward movement.

"Stop!" I commanded, calmly levelling my pistol. "I will not kill you, but I will break your leg and then, as you know, there will be no possi-

bility of your getting away and cheating the gallows. I can see now, and you are aware I don't often miss my aim."

He stood still and eyed me steadily for nearly a minute.

"You win," he announced lightly.

"Very well. I must ask you to carry that gun." I nodded to where it lay on the ground.

"Certainly," he answered, as he went and picked it up; "my submission is complete — for the time." He was smiling as he handled the weapon. "Harmless enough now, I suppose?"

"Quite so."

"Lindsay," he broke out abruptly, "you're a fool not to finish me, and, as you see, I don't feel grateful because you refrain; but may I be damned if I can help admiring you!"

"We must move on," I announced, shortly.

"I am ready."

When we reached the place where I left my horse, I mounted him and relieved Carrington of the rifle. He trudged along on foot making no effort to get nearer to me than I desired. The pain from his broken arm must have been severe. but he gave no indication of feeling it. He seemed in the best of humour and would have carried on a lively

conversation had I given him the least encouragement.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when we arrived at camp. Brutus's barking heralded our approach to Muriel, and I saw a light appear in the window of her shack. I advanced to the door and called her name.

"Thank God! It is you — you are returned!"

She came out with both hands extended, dressed as I had left her in the early evening. It was evident she had been sitting up awaiting my return.

"Yes, God has been good to me; He has allowed me to come back," I answered. I retained her hands and pressed them a second time; I could not help it.

"And Mr. Carrington?" she asked anxiously, as she gently withdrew them from my grasp.

"He is here — in the shack."

"Was he lost?"

"No; he has suffered a slight accident."

"Oh! what is it? — can't we do something for him?"

"His arm has been broken by a fall from his horse; I am about to set it. If you could give me something for bandages —"

She flew into her hut and returned in a moment with what I wanted.

"Now I am going to help you," she announced.

"It will not be necessary," I said gently, "and the sight might unnerve you."

"No," she replied in her sweet gentle way, which nevertheless expressed a quiet determination, "I will not faint, and I want always to be of use when I can."

I made no further objection and she accompanied me into the shack where Carrington sat on a camp stool composedly waiting for me.

I never saw such indifference to pain as he manifested during the operation of setting the broken bone and applying the splints. He joked and made light of the matter, while he must have been suffering the most excruciating tortures; for the break was a bad one, and much manipulation of the injured arm was necessary before I could put on the bandages. I wondered at his grit and I could see that Muriel also was impressed; yet she was shocked by his irreverent, scoffing remark when she innocently observed that while his injury was bad, it might have been much worse, and that at least he could be thankful for that. The girl was of much assistance to me in dressing the arm.

Our task was completed a little before daybreak. When Muriel had left us I went to Carrington to

the provision tent and saw that he was comfortable. Muriel did not know of our exchange of quarters.

"Well, I suppose you think you have me now," said Carrington, good humouredly, as I started to leave him.

"No room to doubt it," I answered. "Good night."

He laughed pleasantly. "Good night. But don't be too sure."

When I returned to the shack I did not go to bed. My first care was to render Hampton's rifle temporarily useless as I previously had done with the other. Then, after waiting awhile, I cautiously approached the provision tent again and assured myself that Carrington was asleep. Going back to the shack I took the satchel and stealing cautiously into the hummock I hastily buried it beside the box containing the cap and newspaper. I did not even stop to open the satchel; sure that it contained the stolen money which I had no wish to look upon, my only desire was to deposit it where Carrington could not regain possession of it and to effect its concealment without being observed by Muriel.

I did not return at once to camp. Instead I rode toward the prairie where the horses usually were at pasture. The sun was over an hour high when I came back to the camp on foot from a different

direction. Muriel, with such help as Carrington could afford, was preparing breakfast. The girl greeted me cheerily.

"Just in time," was her laughing comment. "I'm surprised you could muster energy for an early morning hunt after being up all night. What did you kill?"

"Nothing," I answered with some hesitation.

Muriel regarded me in surprise. "Why, we heard you shoot three times and you don't often miss your mark."

"I suppose I'm a little nervous this morning from loss of rest," I said, smiling with assumed carelessness.

Muriel, apparently thinking me mortified over my failure to bring down the game, changed the subject and we sat down to eat.

I noted Carrington was observing me closely. After the meal he drew me to one side.

"You might have spared the horses; I can make my escape without them," he said.

"I think differently, and we had no real need of them."

He looked long and hard at me and then burst into a laugh.

"Lindsay, you're a determined fellow, and it's a pity to disappoint you."

"You really expect to do that?" incredulously.

His countenance assumed a rather sober expression and he was silent a moment.

"I'm afraid I must," he at last said.

CHAPTER XVII

DRAWING PARALLELS

A WEEK or more passed without special incident. Satisfied I had Carrington secure, for the time at least, I paid little attention to his movements. At nights I always fastened Brutus at the door of the hut and slept with the loaded pistol under my pillow, taking care that the guns were rendered unfit for service, and for extra precaution, placed where my foe could not reach them. Apparently he was reconciled to the situation, seeming not the least crestfallen over his defeat, but on the contrary, cheerful and to all appearances not annoyed by apprehensions for the future. That puzzled me; for how he now figured upon escaping the consequences of his crimes I could not make out. His manner toward me exhibited a cool, laughing defiance, as if he goodnaturedly derided my victory confident that it was merely temporary and unimportant.

One morning when I rose to get breakfast as usual, I discovered Carrington was not in camp. I

gave the matter little thought, supposing he had gone for an early morning walk, and this idea was also readily adopted by Muriel as an explanation of his absence. As the girl and I had planned the previous evening a fishing excursion up the little stream, we did not wait for Carrington's return, but, placing his breakfast where he could easily find it, set out upon our jaunt.

I was conscientiously carrying out my resolve to do everything in my power toward making Muriel's situation more endurable. I gave her every moment I could spare; indeed, we were almost constantly together. The result was what I dreaded and what was, I think, inevitable; I soon found myself hopelessly in love with my beautiful companion. In vain I struggled and reasoned against forming so unhappy an attachment, even stubbornly refusing at first to admit the fact to myself. When I was away on the hunt, in which she could not share, I found myself longing for the moment that would take me back to her. By her side were content and happiness for me; elsewhere, dissatisfaction and misery. At last I frankly admitted to myself the real state of affairs, and owned, beyond my original wish to cheer and entertain her, a more selfish motive for seeking her society in the pleasure it gave me.

Then naturally came the insidious question, why

should I deny myself? In a few weeks we would part, perhaps never to see each other again. Meantime I would say or do nothing unworthy. Muriel would never know the real cause of my devotion. I would snatch these few days of happiness and treasure them. It was much to have known and loved such a woman; I would always remember that, and it might help me better to bear up under the cruel decree of fate that made our union impossible. It would have been better had I never seen Muriel; but since I had seen and unavoidably loved her, I resolutely set myself to the task of drawing only strength and comfort from the acquaintance.

It gave me the purest happiness to win from her an acknowledgment of the value of my services. She said little, but in looks, in acts her appreciation and deep gratitude were plainly manifest. God knows I was not striving to win her love — such love as I felt for her; but I wanted her to think well of me. Whenever I thought of the moment when she must discover all I had guarded her from on the island — chiefly indeed, the knowledge that she had remained there with her father's murderer, I experienced a thrill of satisfaction.

At first Muriel showed a disposition to talk of Carrington; but without rudeness I managed to let

her understand the subject was not an agreeable one, and after a while she ceased to bring it up. I am sure she never suspected that I had made any discoveries about him that I had not confided to her. She had shrunk from him ever since that scene at his wife's death-bed, and I fancied she believed my reluctance to talk of him due to a kindred feeling of aversion dating from the same time. I did not think it wrong to encourage that belief.

One thing caused me secret annoyance: Carrington plainly had discerned my love for Muriel. He ventured upon no open reference, but seemed to derive much amusement from his discovery, indulging in sundry little hints, shrugs, and winks which I affected to ignore but which I was far from receiving as lightly as I pretended. He knew I was a married man, though, of course, ignorant of the circumstance of my domestic unhappiness. But the mere fact that I was accessible to the temptation which had proved his own undoing seemed to cause him gratification.

Muriel and I lingered till past noon on our fishing excursion. It seemed to me the hours flew by. I was very happy. Muriel, too, seemed to forget the passage of time and we were both surprised when I looked at my watch. When we got back to camp we saw no evidences that Carrington had been

there during our absence. His breakfast remained untouched where we had placed it.

I did not concern myself until night began to approach without sign of him. I was at a loss to account for his absence, but I was careful not to let Muriel see my uneasiness. She, with no key to Carrington's conduct, must have thought it rather eccentric on several occasions of late, and I accounted for his disappearance as simply some new whim. If she was not satisfied with such an explanation, she gave no sign. I took extra precautions to guard against surprise that night, but they proved unnecessary.

Carrington did not return until late the following afternoon. Muriel had retired to her hut for a nap and I was stretched in the shade of the live-oak by the other shack with my head pillowed upon my coat, when I saw him emerge from the hummock and make his way cautiously toward the provision tent, casting frequent glances at my recumbent figure.

I sat bolt upright, realizing the next instant that it might have been better to counterfeit the sleep in which evidently he supposed me buried and observe his movements without suspicion. But it was too late now, so I got to my feet and advanced to meet him. He stopped abruptly, seeming a bit discon-

certed, but quickly banished from his countenance all evidence of such a feeling.

"Sorry to interrupt your siesta. And really, it wasn't necessary; I was just hunting something to eat."

"You look as if you need it."

I surveyed him with astonishment. His clothing was torn in a score of places and he was covered with mud from head to foot. The sling in which he had carried his broken arm was gone, as were the splints and bandages, and that member now hung limp and useless, the bone, which had begun to knit, snapped anew. Under his bloodshot eyes were dark circles and his cheeks were pale and hollow. Yet there was still that amused, defiant expression, even more pronounced, I thought, and approaching nearer to triumph than I yet had seen it.

"Yes, I do need it," he said in response to my remark. "I haven't had a bite to eat since I left camp yesterday morning before you were up. I note you have been observing my appearance closely and no doubt it suggests to your acute perceptions what I have been doing."

"Yes. I take it you have been searching on foot for the outlet from the island."

He laughed. "And what if I say I have found it?"

"I don't believe you."

"Why, if I may ask?"

"Because in that case you never would have returned here, having no possible chance to secure the money to take with you in your flight. You would have been only too glad to get away with a whole neck."

He looked at me for fully a minute in silence, his eyes twinkling, his lips smiling, "Shrewdly argued," he said at last, lightly sarcastic. "But, meantime, as I am very hungry—" We stood before the provision tent. He made a mocking bow and entering, began to rummage among the victuals.

He ate ravenously. When he had finished, he heaved a contented sigh and glanced toward his pallet.

"You don't ask me to set your arm again," I observed.

"I was sure you'd offer to do it," he answered, confidently. "If you don't you will have to explain to the dear girl, and that would be awkward."

"I bind it up out of mere humanity. I would do the same for a dog that had broken his leg."

"Thanks. I appreciate your comparison."

I soon had the operation completed, this time without Muriel's assistance. The pain must have been even greater than on the former occasion; but Carrington was, as before, stoically indifferent. I left him composing himself for a nap and returned to my place under the tree.

Half-an-hour later, impelled by a feeling I could not resist, I went again to the door of the provision tent, which I could not see from where I had been lying, and looked in. Carrington had gone.

I could hardly believe my eyes; yet the act was beyond question. I stepped back and swept the landscape outside in every direction, suffering a second surprise at seeing him coming toward me from the edge of the hummock on the south. He waved his hand, bowed and sat down. I hesitated a moment; then went to him.

"Wasn't as tired as I thought," he said with a smile as I came up. "Keeping my muscles in trim for pedestrianism the better to prosecute my investigations in the swamp."

"And it might be you thought of stumbling across the satchel in this little walk."

"Possibly," he returned, carelessly. Then, as he rose: "But won't you join me in my exercise? Should be delighted with your company."

"Sorry I can't return the compliment; but I'll go with you, nevertheless."

He regarded me quizzically. Then with a shrug which implied that my real reasons for accompanying him were incomprehensible, though, whatever they were, he didn't consider them worth bothering about, he led the way along the border of the hummock and presently turned into it with me close at his heels.

My purpose in following him was not very definite. However, I had a vague idea this was a good opportunity to sound a warning I had resolved upon. Of late he had been rather less guarded in exhibiting his evidences of delight at the discovery of my love for Muriel; I was afraid the girl would notice them. Toward her he had never ceased to be considerate, and I believed if I reminded him of the embarrassment which the least suspicion of the meaning of his signs would cause her, he would use more care. But I hardly knew how to bring up the subject; so we walked several minutes in silence.

That Carrington was not thinking about the course he was pursuing any more than I, I presently discovered in rather a startling manner. He pushed through some bushes of holly into a glade, stopped, and, when I joined him next instant, turned and spoke to me.

"Are you enjoying your walk?"

"Very much."

"But wouldn't you like to sit down a while?"

"If you prefer that, it will suit me as well."

"You are accomodating. If it's left to me, I think we'll rest. This is a charming spot for a little tête-à-tête."

He looked around for a suitable seat, and, as his eye encountered a long, narrow mound near the foot of a magnolia tree he started and uttered an ejaculation. Then he stood staring at the grave. He seemed to forget my presence. His head slowly sank upon his breast and he raised his hand in a helpless way. At last he dropped limply upon the sand and sat motionless, his attitude one of utter despair. Murderer as he was, I pitied him.

Presently he seemed to remember I was there, and slowly raising his head, turned his eyes upon me, and addressed me in a voice strangely unlike his own.

"Lindsay, you have my pistol at your belt. Draw it and kill me, as I have tried to make you do."

"I will not be your executioner," I answered.

"I am guilty of all the crimes with which you charge me."

"A jury shall have proof of that and decide upon your punishment."

He swore impatiently and starting to his feet, walked twice or thrice across the glade. Within a yard of me he stopped, facing me, and motioned toward the grave.

"All I ever cared for lies there," he said. "Do you suppose it makes any difference to me whether or not I escape? What is life, freedom, wealth, without her? Let me be frank: If I persist in my determination to leave the island, it is only because of the satisfaction it will give me to balk you. I have enjoyed this fight. You are an antagonist worthy of any man's steel. It is something to defeat you. Therefore I have kept on with my efforts; but it isn't from any notion I may find life worth the living after I get away."

"No wonder, when you would carry with you the consciousness of your guilt."

"My crimes were committed for her; they weigh less heavily upon me on that account. It is the loss of her that I feel deepest."

"You suffer no remorse for that cowardly murder?"

"I did not say that. I regret the necessity — doubly so because of the poor girl. But what was I to do? I did not know he had that infernal paper

when we came to the island. I suppose in the hurry of our departure he stuffed it into his pocket without looking at it; for it is certain he did not know of its contents till that day by the lake. I think he changed the coat he wore from Miami for another upon reaching the island, and did not again put on the first, in the pocket of which was the paper, till we went on that fatal excursion. I tried to convince him he was wrong in identifying me with the Chicago embezzler, but unfortunately my confusion at the start had settled him in his belief. I did all I could to avoid violence. He would listen to nothing. I even offered to place in his hands the funds I had taken, allowing him to return them to the Company if only he would connive at our escape to Honduras; but he refused. He was thoroughly aroused because, as he said, I had made him a tool in my criminal schemes. He told me he was going back to Miami to bring officers to arrest me. I warned him. He was in my power, I said, and I would not allow that. He defied me. He made preparations to go and dared me to interfere with his departure. There was only one way; you know what happened."

I shuddered. "Thus did theft beget murder," I said after a moment's silence.

"Why not trace the genealogy a step further

and discover in unlawful love the parent of theft?" There was a contemptuous challenge in his tone and manner.

"Your discernment is not at fault," I answered. "Right there began the trouble."

He bent a steady look upon me. "Lindsay, I might show you how a parallel may be drawn."

"What do you mean?"

"Sit down; I want to favour you with some of my history." He settled himself upon the sand.

"I doubt I shall find it interesting," I told him; nevertheless I followed his example and found a seat.

He ignored my remark. "I suppose you know that I, like you, am a married man?" There was just a perceptible emphasis on the words involving the comparison.

I felt the explanation would come later and merely replied: "Yes, the paper told me that."

"Very well. You found the cause of this to be unlawful love; I say it was in an ill-assorted, ill-considered marriage."

He regarded me steadily.

"You will have to explain," I said.

"Listen: I stand convicted in your eyes, a thief, adulterer, murderer — a wretch without one redeeming trait. I am what circumstances have made

me. So it is with all. Once the great desire of my life was to be the head of a home where happiness should be found in goodness, love, and contentment. I strove to make such a home; I applied myself diligently to my business with that end — was successful and carefully laid by my earnings. I met Harriet. She knew of and seemed to sympathize with my aspirations. How did I know she had run up false colours? It was not her that I loved but what she pretended to be. I did not learn my mistake till it was too late. I found out gradually — years passed before she threw off the mask completely. But too soon after we were man and wife I discovered she cared nothing for the simple life that had been my dream. The attraction was the wealth I was accumulating; to scatter this recklessly in social pleasures was her chief delight. She never loved me; for my wishes, comfort, likes and dislikes she cared nothing. Indeed, she took pleasure in crossing and thwarting me in everything. I reasoned with her, bore with her, tried to love her; but she would not let me. She made of home a hell instead of the heaven I confidently had expected from her presence and efforts. Then I found her unfaithful.

"I spared her the shame of exposure in the divorce court, for her family's sake and especially

her mother's, whom I love and honour. We united our efforts to reclaim my wife. I did not cast her off. Instead, hoping to win her, I gratified every extravagant whim. My little fortune was soon gone; for Harriet, not Alice, I became a criminal. I falsified my accounts with the company, taking money that did not belong to me — first a little, gradually more, till the total reached an appalling figure. And to what purpose? — my wife continued to wrong me.

"I became desperate and plunged into dissipation. But that did not last; for I met *her*." He lowered his voice and nodded toward the grave. "She had suffered much as I had suffered. By sympathy we were drawn together. Then came something more than sympathy."

He leaned eagerly forward and looked me in the eye. "Tell me: Do you think we truly, sincerely loved each other?"

"Yes," I answered; "I believe you did."

"I knew you would say it; it was plain to all." He sat musing; then lifted his head defiantly. "We did what we knew the world would condemn if it was found out. For our course I make no apology, I feel no compunctions. I found Alice all I had once supposed Harriett. We were happy. Our love was pure. I turned from the mockery of my

life in Chicago and came to the little home in Nashville, the best in my heart and brain alive and active. I felt I had earned this stolen delight; for I was protecting a guilty woman from public exposure and supporting her in profusion. But because of an expected change in the Company my stealings must soon become known. I told Alice. I explained we must seek a refuge in some foreign country. I would secure the means of making comfortable our exile. If I had robbed my employers for my unworthy wife, why not for her who really loved me, as I did her? Alice was shocked. She had not suspected I was short in my accounts. But she was true to me; if I was forced to fly, she would fly with me. You know the rest."

He was silent, thoughtful.

"One or two things are not clear to me," I said; "and since you seem in a communicatve mood —"

"Go on," he interrupted; "ask what you want to know."

"You came to the island because you counted upon the early discovery of your dishonesty which would make it difficult for you to get out of the country at once?"

"Exactly. And by sacrificing my beard and making other changes in my appearance I was sure

I could get safely here to remain till vigilance was relaxed."

"Wouldn't it have given additional security to travel with Hampton and his daughter?"

"That was my original intention; but the Company had a large picture of me, copies of which I knew would appear in all the papers as soon as my shortage and flight were discovered. In a remote town like Miami I thought there was least likelihood that my friends would see one of these pictures which they would certainly recognize; for that in the Company's possession had recently been taken and was an excellent likeness. I could not venture to get it back without exciting suspicion; thus I managed to have Hampton and his daughter precede me here before I took the last large sum from my employers and fled."

"That is all. Thank you — I understand now."

"Now if you please I shall ask you a question."

"Certainly."

Slowly, impressively he spoke:

"Do you condemn my relations with her who lies there?" He nodded toward the mound.

"Yes," I answered hastily.

He regarded me gravely. "We loved each other, not in fitful passion, but steadily, deeply, respect-

fully, enduringly as man and wife should — you admit that?"

"I have said so."

"Then what if not that makes sacred the union of man and woman?"

"It requires in addition the sanction of the law, divine and human."

"The time is past when I was fool enough to admit anything divine. Human law was made for our convenience and there are exceptional cases it cannot cover. I maintain our love was blameless."

"And I assert the contrary. But it is useless to argue the point." I rose and made a motion to go.

"One moment, please," he pleaded, also getting to his feet and reaching out his hand as if to stop me. "Are you very sure that, placed in a like position and suffering a like temptation, you would not yield as I did?"

Again that peculiar note was in his voice, and I paused on the point of replying angrily to the implied comparison and searched his countenance with unavailing scrutiny. "I am human, of course," I said; "but I think there are few situations in which you and I are likely to act alike."

"Well, you may discover differently. I think I can manage so you will."

"What am I to understand by that remark?"

"You mean you want me to show how the parallel may be drawn?"

"Go on. I will bear your insolence to get at your meaning, though I doubt again if it is worth my while."

"Lindsay, why do you never mention your wife?"

"My wife?" I gasped, and stared in silence.

"Yes," he returned, calmly. "Here you are, separated from her under extraordinary circumstances. She is ignorant of your whereabouts, or indeed, whether you are dead or alive. Yet you appear to concern yourself very little about the distress of mind she naturally should be in. You have hardly mentioned her since coming to the island. If you loved her, you would talk of her. Something is wrong between you. I flatter myself that I am a good judge of character, and I regard you as a — in short I think well of you; therefore, I incline to believe the fault lies with her and — Don't interrupt me," he begged, lifting his hand with a gesture of deprecation, as I started to break in upon him; "you invited me to speak and I have only a few more words to say." Then with great deliberation and his seriousness lightened by

an arch look: "You came to this lone island where you find a beautiful girl in a position which —"

"That is enough," I said, sternly. "I understand what you would say, but you need not utter it. Nevertheless, I am glad you brought this subject up, for I followed you in this walk to warn you."

"To warn me?"

"I will speak plainly. You seem to think I have fallen in love with Miss Hampton —"

"You mistake; I *know* you have," he broke in with a provoking laugh.

"And," I continued, ignoring the interruption, though I could feel the tell-tale blood in my cheeks, "and I want to tell you that you must not and shall not make her uncomfortable by letting her discover that you entertain such a notion."

"That would be useless since sooner or later she will find out herself that you love her; besides being doomed, I think, to make a second and equally important discovery." Smilingly he answered the involuntary look of inquiry I shot at him, "She will also learn that she loves you."

"That is false!" I exclaimed hotly; "she does not and never will."

Again he indulged in taunting mirth. "We shall see. I will do my best to bring you to a

mutual understanding. It will be long before brother Dudley comes, and after I leave, you will have this beautiful island, this Southern Garden of Eden, this tropical paradise entirely to yourselves. Dame Nature is likely to prove all-powerful here, fight as you may against yielding to her decrees. I prophesy —"

I strode fiercely toward him. "Not another word, or —"

He laughed in my face. "Strike," he said contemptuously, "shoot! kill! — nothing could please me better."

I turned away in baffled rage and once more his scornful laughter rang out.

"Lindsay!"

I faced him angrily.

Now there was no suspicion of levity in his looks or manner. They were earnest, sincere, impressive.

"Lindsay, I swear I like you, and wish you only good. If your wife, as I suspect, has wronged you as mine did me, why should you thrust away happiness that will fully indemnify you? Not for an instant have I regretted that part of my conduct. Neither will you; for in your case it need not lead to murder, and, —"

"Villain!" I flung myself passionately from him and started for the glade.

He was silent till I had taken a dozen steps. Then he called in a voice of conviction: "Nevertheless, you are doomed to draw this parallel."

"With God's help, never!"

"God?" he echoed, and burst into a mocking laugh. He called again and louder as I was getting farther from him: "You'll be of my way of thinking before long. When I have left the island, come to this spot and you'll find I have been your friend — the friend of both of you."

I did not reply, but quickened my steps to get out of hearing, and hurriedly made my way toward camp with my brain in a whirl.

CHAPTER XVIII

A BEQUEST

MURIEL was gratified at Carrington's return. I had accounted for his absence by explaining that he was making the circuit of the island on foot in hopes of discovering an outlet, adding now in his presence that he had not been successful, in which statement he seemed to acquiesce, though, when Muriel was not looking, he winked and shrugged at me to imply that we two knew better. I did not allow that to annoy me, as I knew he intended. I had reached the island on foot, but that I regarded as almost a miracle. I did not believe there was one chance in a thousand of the feat's being repeated by anybody; and of course to leave the island thus would be equally difficult. Therefore, I experienced no uneasiness when on the following morning I found that Carrington again had disappeared. Neither did I concern myself when he failed to return that night and yet the night following.

About midnight of the second night I was

wakened by a sudden and furious barking of Brutus, whom, as usual, I had tied at the door of the shack. I sprang up and hurrying to the door with my pistol in hand, peered out into the darkness. The dog at a word from me ceased his noisy baying, but continued to growl and showed signs of uneasiness. I was satisfied that Carrington was near, and so was not surprised suddenly to see the flash of a light coming from beneath the canvas of the provision tent. I smiled. It was probable, I thought, Carrington had made such a visit to the tent the night previous without arousing Brutus. By obtaining his food in this way he would make his absence seem more prolonged, to me, as he supposed, additional cause for worry. As the dog had given the alarm, I fancied Carrington believed any attempt at concealment useless on this occasion and therefore had lighted a candle; but in the future I thought he would be more cautious in his approach.

I was gratified at my discovery. I have said I was not annoyed over Carrington's absence, but that is scarcely true. I did not, indeed, feel that he could get away from the island; but, knowing his desperation, I dreaded lest it might lead him to dare unwise risks in prosecuting his investigations which might result in his perishing in the swamps.

It was now apparent he was conducting his search with some degree of prudence. This, indeed, he might cast aside as the time for Dudley's coming drew near and he found himself still unsuccessful. I thought I was safe in allowing him to roam at will at least a week longer. Then I would take some means, yet to be decided upon, for keeping him always under my eye. I found myself wishing his leg instead of his arm had sustained the fracture.

The light shone from under the tent ten or fifteen [illegible]es. I rather thought it an invitation for me [illegible]ome down and address him, but I did not [illegible]e to gratify him. As soon as it was put out [illegible]t back to bed, confident Brutus would advise [illegible] Carrington approached the shack. The dog [illegible]inued his low growling four or five minutes; then lapse[illegible] into silence.

I lay [illegible]ke a long time. When I did fall asleep it was only to be aroused a second time by the barking of the dog. While I had vainly tried to woo slumber, he had seemed restless. I got up again at this second alarm, but without satisfying myself as to what caused it.

It was very dark; the moon had set before I had awakened the first time. Brutus did not bark fiercely now, as if Carrington were near; his nose

was pointed toward the hummock to the north, and now and then he would utter a succession of short yelps which did not seem inspired by anger. I listened intently and thought I heard a slight noise in the direction the dog indicated, being confirmed in this opinion by the fact that he redoubled his barking and tugged frantically upon his leash. I supposed some wild beast was at the edge of the timber, but I knew if I loosed Brutus upon him, the dog might prolong the chase and leave me exposed without warning to a possible attack from Carrington, who was doubtless lurking near. So I quieted my sentinel, who ceased his efforts to get free and readily came to my side.

Now and then, however, he would suddenly start up and run to the limit of his leash toward that part of the hummock where his more acute senses detected something that failed to be grasped by my own.

A vague feeling of uneasiness began to lay hold of me. I had half-decided to approach the hummock and try to learn what was disturbing the dog; but I reflected that on Muriel's account I should take no unnecessary risk. I went back into the shack, dressed, and issued forth again. Brutus was quieter now, though he continued at intervals to prick up his ears and turn his head

sharply and with eager attention to the hummock.

After I had sat watching him for some time, I became unnerved. Several times I fancied I heard a sound as of someone walking near, and once I started to my feet at the supposed snapping of a twig behind me. Again I thought I heard groans coming from the thicket. Some of these apprehensions Brutus seemed to verify by showing increased excitement.

Some mysterious influence was working upon me. I imagined all sorts of ghastly things. Among these came the thought that perhaps Carrington had murdered Muriel. My common sense told me he could have no motive for such a dastardly crime, yet so persistently did that fancy assert itself that I could not rest till I had crept to the door of the girl's shack and by listening till I heard her breathing as she slept, assured myself my fears were groundless. I was so beset by a strange, unreasoning dread, so chilled by a horror I could not understand, that I with difficulty checked an impulse to arouse my lovely companion and call her to my side for the sake of the renewed courage and confidence her presence would give. But in another instant I was heartily ashamed of my cowardice, and, going resolutely back to my hut,

sat down on the edge of my couch, angry with myself and determined not to yield again to fears that my judgment pronounced unfounded.

Without removing my clothes I stretched myself upon the pallet and resorted to such expedients as counting backward from a hundred, to lull myself from the hummock to the north.

Suddenly my ears were saluted by a sound that caused me to reach the centre of the hut almost at one bound, erect with every sense alert, and all thought of slumber banished from my mind. It was the neigh of a horse, coming, as I thought, from the hummock to the north.

The sound was succeeded by a burst of barking from Brutus which lengthened at the close to a prolonged and melancholy howl. I rebuked him and he was silent. Then I listened with strained attention. Was it possible my fancy had imposed me? Again I heard the sound, very feeble, but unmistakable in its character. I hastily secured my pistol, unloosed Brutus and followed him as he dashed off in the direction whence the sound seemed to come.

That ghostly, uncanny something in the first dim light of early morning I felt as I never had before. As I advanced the shadows seemed peopled with ominous shapes and I found myself strug-

gling in vain to calm the rapid beating of my heart. In the gray obscurity ahead I saw something move. I halted, and my hair seemed to rise and stand on end as it came slowly toward me. I am no coward, but my long vigil, haunted by strange, monstrous, undefined fears, had for the time almost unmanned me. Quickly I recognized how causeless was my fright, as the moving object assumed the well-known outlines of Brutus. He sat down a few paces from me, trembling, subdued.

I went to him and patted his head. Then I took a step or two forward. "Brutus, come on, old fellow." But he did not follow. Instead, he stretched himself on the ground, sniffed toward the hummock and whined uneasily. After a moment's hesitation I went on and left him.

I entered the thicket and peered cautiously around me. I could make out objects at a distance of perhaps twenty feet. With the consciousness that I stood within a few yards of the little opening in the underbrush where we had buried Mrs. Carrington came a cold feeling at my heart. The bushes at my side were violently agitated and, as I leaped away and levelled my pistol, I saw the commotion was caused by a horse that was down and making desperate efforts to regain his feet. I went to him as he ceased his ineffectual strug-

gles and he turned his head toward me uttering a low, plaintive whinny. I saw he was bridled and an instant later I recognized him as the horse which had sprained his leg and which I supposed had wandered off and perished in the swamps.

"Carrington!" I called, softly.

There was no response. A faint gust of wind rustled the leaves and died away in a long-drawn sigh.

"Carrington!" This time my voice was louder; but the silence continued unbroken.

I stood irresolute. A nameless, shapeless horror oppressed me. It was not fear now; for I knew my enemy was unarmed and that I had all the advantage. I had sought a deadly encounter when he had it in his power to do me harm. For a moment I battled fiercely against an unaccountable reluctance to enter the glade; then, conquering it, I stepped quickly inside.

There I found Carrington. His back was toward me; he was leaning against the little magnolia near the woman's grave. Apparently he was sound asleep after a hard exhausting ride through the swamps. His head had fallen on his breast, his attitude was one of complete relaxation.

I advanced, laid my hand on his shoulder and spoke to him; but he did not wake. Then I shook

him vigorously, and as I released my grasp, was horrified to see his great frame sink limply to the ground, where it lay in a heap, face downward, without motion. Quickly I seized his arm and turned him over upon his back. Then I uttered a cry and stood petrified at sight of a hideous, gaping slash across his throat from which the blood, flowing in torrents, had deluged the front of his clothing and crimsoned the sand where he sat.

He was quite dead, though the warmth had scarcely left his body. As soon as I had ascertained that fact, I sat down and tried to regain my composure. By the time that I had done so it was daylight, and I rose to examine my surroundings.

First, I looked again at Carrington. His eyes were half-open and his pale features, dabbed here and there with blood, were set in a sneer. I found the hunting knife he had used, stained and clotted, lying on the sand close to a holly bush whose leaves were sprinkled with red. Then something caught my eye, causing me to wonder I had not seen it before. It was an envelope tacked to the trunk of the magnolia at about the height of a man's head from the ground.

I took it down and saw that the envelope was addressed to me. I opened it and found the following letter.

"LINDSAY: — I am about to do the job I could not force upon you. You will have to admit defeat in your cherished plan for seeing me duly hanged. I feel that I owe you some compensation for this disappointment, therefore I leave you a new identity. You are now Alfred Farley, a wealthy Englishman with business interests in Honduras. My agent, Signor Maceo, who expects me at Balize, has the deeds to a coffee plantation ready for delivery. He knows me as Farley but has never seen me. Don't be a fool; if the old life has been a failure forget it and begin another. You can take her to Honduras as your wife. Her brother, ignorant of your marriage ties and anxious to save his sister's reputation, will gladly consent. Lindsay is dead to the world already, why should he come to life? You have money enough at hand for the new existence. Evidently you did not open the satchel you were at such pains to secure. Search my jacket — I make you my heir. I leave you in the keeping of Mother Nature; learn of her and forget the teachings of fools!"

There was no signature. I reread this remarkable communication twice. Then I returned it to the envelope and, placing it in my pocket, sat for a long time reflecting upon the situation.

Plainly Carrington had been prosecuting his search for the outlet on the horse he had found in the hummock, having restored him with the liniment taken from my shack. The hopelessness of his search must have become apparent to him and I knew from his last conversation that he realized that even in escape he could find no peace of mind.

One thought above every other had come to dominate his tortured brain — to outwit me and make good his assurance that I should never bring him to trial for his crimes. In this he had succeeded, and his mocking letter proved that he had counted upon the terrible temptations of the situation in which his death would leave me to work his revenge.

I shuddered at his determination that Muriel and I should be forced to imitate his wretched example. But just now there was but one question demanding immediate solution — how was I to avoid telling the girl of this suicide?

Perhaps I could bury Carrington where he lay and persuade her he had been lost in the swamps. I could easily account for the presence of the horse, for I had told Muriel that because the forage was exhausted near camp, I had taken the horses to a remote part of the island where grass was abundant.

Removing the trappings, I could convince her this one had wandered back to die, perhaps of a serpent's bite, near the shacks.

While occupied in the glade I was dimly conscious that the horse whinnied several times. I did not remember it was this sound, so unexpected, so extraordinary under the circumstances, that led me into the thicket to investigate. Swiftly I began to carry out my plans. From Carrington's still limp form I removed the blood-stained coat, the pockets of which bulged with packages of bank-notes and quantities of gold coin. I perceived at once the significance of the reference to his jacket in the letter, but was at a loss to understand how he could have secured the treasure which I supposed I had so effectively concealed.

As soon as I had taken off the coat I realized that my labour was unnecessary since for the present I would merely drag the body to a temporary place of concealment in the thicket, and devote myself to obliterating all the bloody evidence in the glade. In the night I would return and bury Carrington.

I secured the fatal knife and holding it in my right hand with the jacket, hastily folded, upon my left arm, I returned to the corpse and stood considering in which direction I had best carry it.

I stooped and examined it intently, wondering at the resolution of a man who could deliberately inflict it upon himself. The money was sewed into the pockets of the jacket, but not securely; for, as I moved my arm slightly, a shower of gold and several packages of bank-notes fell out upon the dead man's chest. With a low exclamation I put down the jacket and bent to gather up the money.

"My God!"

I leaped to my feet and turned quickly, the bloody knife still in my hand, as the words, breathed in an intense, penetrating whisper fraught with horror, came from behind me.

Muriel, quivering from head to foot, one hand pressed to her heart, the other raised to her head, her white lips apart, her breath coming in audible gasps, her eyes wide, her body crouching, stood looking at me.

"Go back!" I cried, "you must not come here! this is no place for you!"

I flung down the crimson knife and took a step toward her; but she leaped backward and put out her hands to ward me off. As the awful conviction of what this meant struck me, I stood unable to move, unable to speak. She turned to flee. Then I found the use of my tongue and my limbs.

"Muriel! Muriel! listen to me! I did not do it!" I reached her side and tried to catch her arm.

"Monster!" she shrieked, striking wildly at me. Then she fell senseless upon the sand.

CHAPTER XIX

A CRISIS

I TOOK the girl in my arms and carried her toward the camp. She was no light burden. Before I had covered half the distance I was forced to lower her to the ground for rest. She soon showed signs of returning consciousness.

For a moment I was undecided what to do. I was confident that I could easily convince her of the truth, but should she now regain her consciousness and find me bending over her, the shock would be severe. However, I concluded it was as well for her to endure it now as later, since ultimately she must listen to the story. So I continued to fan her with a palmetto leaf, which I had hastily clipped, till she opened her eyes. I had unfastened her shirtwaist at the throat and loosened her skirt around the waist, so that she could breathe easier.

"Lie still and try to collect your faculties," I said in an authoritative voice. "I want to explain this to you."

At once she remembered. A look of terror

came into her countenance and she made a feeble effort to push me away. I seized her arm in a firm grasp and spoke to her with a sternness that seemed necessary.

"Listen: Carrington killed himself by the grave of the woman he loved. And you, *you* could think I murdered him — and for money!"

She looked at me, bewildered.

"I do not ask you to take my unsupported word for all I am about to tell you. I have proof to show you. Are you strong enough to hear me? can you follow what I say?"

She nodded in the affirmative.

"You heard the horse neigh, saw nobody in camp and went to the thicket to investigate. By the same sound I had been attracted there before you. I found what you saw and this note explaining the suicide." I held up the envelope so she could see the address; I had no mind she should know the contents. She was hanging upon my words with breathless interest.

"Let me help you to sit up," I said gently, and held out my hand.

She took it without comment and I succeeded in making her comfortable with her back against the tree beneath whose shade we sat. Then I resumed.

"When you came to the glade I was making preparations to conceal the body. To save you from a disagreeable shock I intended to let you believe that he had perished in the swamps. To-night I would have buried him by the woman."

I paused to give her time to comprehend what I told her. Then I went on, slowly.

"Now about that money: Carrington had stolen it. His real name was Sanford, not Carrington. and he robbed his employers in Chicago of a large amount. He duped your father into bringing him to this island where he thought he could remain in security till vigilance at the ports should be relaxed. Then with the woman, who was not his wife, he intended to fly to Honduras and live off his ill-gotten wealth."

Muriel leaned forward with a cry, her eyes riveted upon my face.

"I discovered this in various ways," I continued. "The copy of the Miami *Register,* which —" I stopped short, realizing my mistake. I meant, if possible, to keep from her the secret of her father's fate.

She noted my embarrassment and was perplexed. "Do you mean the paper father brought here?" she asked, regarding me curiously.

"Yes," I answered with some hesitation; "I found it in the open yonder."

"Did you learn much from that?"

"No, no! — only a little," I hastily assured her. "It merely gave me a clew. Most of my information came in other ways. I may tell you too that Carrington confessed all to me."

She rose and came to me with outstretched hands. "Can you forgive me?"

I smiled upon her as we stood, our hands joined. "There is nothing to forgive. It was a natural mistake under the circumstances."

"Oh! but I will never forgive myself!" she declared, her self-reproach pictured in her countenance.

"Pshaw! you must forget about it," I said lightly.

"No, I shall not be able to do that." Her voice was trembling. "To think that for one instant I could suppose you, you, whom I know to be so good, so brave, so — oh! you say you can forgive me, but can you, *can* you really do it?"

I still held her hands. She moved nearer. Her lips were twitching, her eyes swimming in tears; her beautiful features, with a look of humble, piteous appeal, were within a few inches of my

own. I wanted to kiss her — to clasp her to my bosom; it cost me a mighty struggle to refrain. But I dropped her hands and said, rather brusquely:

"Come, Miss Hampton, I've told you truly that I feel no resentment toward you. You had no time to think — "

"That is it," she broke in earnestly. "It was so sudden, so unexpected. If I had stopped to reason — "

"Which, naturally, you were too frightened, too horror-stricken to do. So let us think no more about it. I will take you back to camp now."

The distance was short. She leaned heavily on my arm.

"You must tell me all about this," she said, as we reached the shacks.

"This afternoon, perhaps."

It was a busy day for me. I buried Carrington by the side of the woman he loved, that task occupying most of the morning. Then I turned my attention to the horse, deciding there was a chance of my being able to get him to his feet again. He was weak from starvation and hard usage. I carried some grass and water to him and managed to prop him up while he ate and drank. I gave him only a little at a time, and I thought

I could see his strength increased by this nourishment, though his several efforts to rise proved unavailing. However, I was not discouraged and resolved to continue my efforts.

I dug up the satchel and the tin box and, opening the first, found it filled with stones, sand, and Spanish moss. At once I perceived the solution of what had puzzled me when I found the money in Carrington's jacket. With characteristic shrewdness he had, as soon as he obtained the satchel from Muriel, disposed its contents upon his person and from the rubbish with which he had filled it I inferred that he had intended to leave the bag where I might discover it. I have already stated that I was so eager to conceal my recovered prize without being observed that it never occurred to me to examine its contents.

Emptying out the rubbish, I restored the original contents and started with the satchel and the box to my hut, when looking up I was surprised to see Muriel coming toward me. I stood waiting.

"Don't drive me back — I'm lonely," she said with a piteous smile.

"I was coming in a moment to keep you company."

"You look very tired; can't I help you in some way?" Her eye caught the spade, the hole in the

sand and the box. "Oh! I beg pardon; I will wait for you at the camp." She turned away, embarrassed.

"No, no!" I objected, reaching her side and detaining her. "We will sit down in this lovely spot and I will tell you some of the things I promised." I pointed to the box. "That contains evidence which would have convicted Carrington. You will forgive me," I added in a lower tone, "for encouraging you in the belief that it was something else. When I asked you to take charge of it if anything happened to me, Carrington and I were on terms of mortal defiance. We had been so ever since I gave you the satchel which held the money he had stolen and which I had managed to get into my hands. I thought he would not want to leave the island without it and my purpose, announced to him, was to keep him here at any cost. I contrived to disarm him at first, but — "

"Oh!" she interrupted in a tone of bitter self-condemnation, "and I gave him the gun as well as the satchel! I might have been the cause of your death!" The thought seemed to pierce her heart.

I dropped my eyes. In hers was a soft light that startled me. Was it possible Carrington's perception had been more acute than mine? Had

I inspired in the breast of this sweet girl a feeling such as I entertained for her? I could scarcely repress a shudder at the thought in memory of Carrington's dark prophecy. But I affected to laugh.

"That would have been a just penalty for not trusting you."

"Why didn't you trust me?" she asked in a voice of gentle reproach.

I had blundered again. As I stood uncertain how to present the case, she continued:

"I confided to you my own doubts concerning the man; do you think it was fair not to tell me your discoveries? Then, instead of hindering, I might have helped you."

"There was an even chance of his winning in our fight, killing me and deceiving you with some false account of my death. Then you would have been alone with him on this island; but I have reasons for thinking you would have been in no particular danger as long as he was sure you had no knowledge of his crimes and so could not denounce him if help came."

Her face blanched.

"Do you think he would have committed murder to prevent capture?"

"He was a desperate man."

"But why did he kill himself? I should think he would have fought it out to the last; and many days must pass before Dudley comes."

"I think he had become convinced of the futility of his efforts and of the uselessness of his life even if escape were possible." Then I told her his history. "He felt there was nothing left worth living for after Alice died," I concluded. "You know we have commented on the cold despair, the utter recklessness into which he quickly drifted."

"Yet he continued his search for the outlet," mused Muriel.

"And might have killed me, if I tried to prevent, had he not been suddenly and forcibly reminded that happiness for him was nowhere, she being dead. His great love, joined to his hopeless philosophy, must have led to this end sooner or later. There might have been other motives that hurried him into the deed." She could not know I was thinking of the trap he had laid for us.

"How did he learn you knew his story?"

"He discovered it by accident."

"And would have murdered you because of your announced intention of informing upon him?"

"So he declared."

She looked at me long and earnestly.

"Mr. Lindsay, what was in that paper?"

"Paper?"

"Yes, the Miami *Register*."

I understood the trend of her thoughts. There was not now the same powerful motive for keeping her in ignorance. Her father's slayer was beneath the ground. But I shrank from tearing open a wound just beginning to heal. It was terrible enough for her to think of her father's perishing alone in the swamp; yet she had accustomed herself to contemplate that idea with resignation and calmness. Now must I tell her he had been foully murdered and his remains given to the alligators of the lake?

"You do not answer?"

"I have explained that it gave me a clew to the mystery."

"Why can you not be frank with me? Was there enough there to warrant one in bringing an accusation against Carrington?"

"Yes," I answered in a low tone.

I heard her catch her breath.

"Don't you think it likely that father read it?"

There was no help for it now. I rose, went to her and took her hand.

"I am sure he read it," I said, gravely.

Her great, questioning eyes searched my coun-

tenance. The colour had forsaken her cheeks and lips. I felt her hand trembling.

"I would have spared you this, for a time at least — till your brother came — "

She made a gesture of disapproval. "Tell me all — now!"

"Your father made the discovery on that last fishing trip to the lake with Carrington. He was indignant that he had been duped — made to assist in the criminal's plans for escaping. In his anger he imprudently told Carrington what he knew, and threatened to return to Miami for officers. I think he actually started, but — "

I paused, willing she should infer the rest. She read it in my looks.

"Oh!" she cried, "oh!" and would have fallen had I not caught and supported her.

I will not dwell upon that painful scene. My heart bleeds for her yet when I think of it. When she had in some measure recovered from her horror and grief, she insisted that I tell her the details and how I had learned them. I could not refuse her. I began with the incident of my finding the bullet-hole in the skull of the horse her father had ridden, which first aroused my suspicions. I left out nothing — nothing except, of course, certain parts of that last conversation by the woman's grave that

dealt with the parallel to his own case that Carrington insisted would be drawn. I told her of the paper, how I had found it, and all I had learned from it; of the words uttered by the dying woman that led to my investigations at the lake; of the finding of the cap by Brutus and the dog's peculiar behaviour and what I inferred from it; of my surprise by Carrington and our first struggle; of my precautions to keep the satchel out of his reach and him unarmed, which innocently she had defeated; of my search for him at night in the hummock and our desperate encounter; of my slaughter of the horses to prevent his escape; of his outwitting me in the matter of the contents of the satchel and concerning the horse on which he had pursued his search for the outlet. Then I opened the box and showed her the cap, the paper and the letter I had written to her brother and by which I had made certain the punishment of Carrington even should I fall by his hand.

I wonder now I could have been so blind. I wonder now I could have given no thought to the crisis toward which my story was hurrying us. Had I knelt at her feet and told her of my devotion, it would not have been so complete, so powerful an avowal as I actually made. It was my manner of telling it, I think, as much as the story

itself. My tenderness, my sympathy, my willingness to dare all risks for her, my inexorable resolve to punish the villain who had robbed her of a father, my care in shielding her from a knowledge of the horror of her situation, — all this told plainer than more direct words the adoration I felt for her. And I might have remembered too that all my services would now be exaggerated in her eyes because of the great though momentary injustice she had done me, for which she had not forgiven herself, for which she was anxious to atone. I should have reflected, too, that all my previous attentions and the pains I had taken for her comfort and happiness would be remembered now with more gratitude than was their due. I ought to have remembered that she knew my sad story, my life's great disappointment, the ungratified yearning in my heart. I might have recalled — But it is needless to go on; I remembered nothing. In the joy of telling her how I esteemed the privilege of serving her, what unequalled pleasure it gave me, — in the happiness of seeing her give evidence of the high value she attached to my efforts I forgot all else.

But now at last I had ceased to speak. The moon had risen. We sat side by side upon the sand. I held both her hands in mine; I do not

know how they came there. We were silent a long time. Impulsively she moved a little nearer and looked up into my face.

"I can never be grateful enough," she whispered.

I bent over her till my lips almost touched her cheek. She did not shrink. I dropped one of her hands. Slowly my arm stole around her waist. I drew her to me and kissed her lips twice. She sighed, and her head fell upon my shoulder. It nestled there restfully. I pressed her closer.

"I love you," I murmured.

Suddenly her arms were around my neck.

"Don't ever, ever, ever leave me!" was her impassioned prayer.

One moment of intoxicating bliss, but only one.

I felt her struggling to get free, and, recalled to myself, let my arms fall from about her. She rose, staggered weakly away, and, sinking down again upon the sand, buried her face in her hands and began to sob. I stood now, trembling, bewildered, uncertain what to say or do. Then I withdrew a few paces and remained till I had regained my composure. I noticed she had ceased to weep and was sitting motionless, her head bowed. Assuming an air of authority I approached her.

"Come, Miss Hampton, we must go back to camp."

"Wait," she said, and rising to her knees, remained thus, looking wistfully into my face.

I held out my hand to assist her to her feet, but she shook her head. Then she spoke in a low, solemn tone:

"Do you remember that we are to be here many weeks, perhaps months — alone?"

"May God help us!"

"He will. Let us kneel here together and ask Him."

Something in that voice stilled the yet tumultuous beating of my heart. Had I wished, I could not have refused her request. I dropped upon the sand beside her, and listened to her prayer.

"Our Father, who for Thine own wise purpose has placed us here, do not abandon but be always with us, and save, oh, save us from — ourselves!"

I stole a glance at her. The moon fell full upon the spot where she knelt. I saw her lovely features aglow with a holy light. An awe of her crept over me. She did not seem of flesh and blood now. Had I dared to touch with my lips a being like that? I almost cried out with the pain of it.

She rose. "Now we will go," she said, quietly.

For a moment I could not stir from my knees.

I was held there paying homage to this new divinity within her. Her prayer had brought it, or else had cleared my vision so I could better see and understand what all the time had been there.

At last I stood by her side. But I did not offer my arm. I could not. Together we went silently down the hill to the camp.

CHAPTER XX

WAITING

Days grew into weeks. May came and passed. Still we waited for Dudley. The hunting party was to have left the island about the first of May. We had calculated upon Dudley's taking alarm at his father's and sister's continued absence by the middle of that month at least; for, as Muriel told me, an important business matter in which they were jointly interested must be attended to then and would require some previous consultation. Dudley's uneasiness might not lead him at once to the island to investigate, but it seemed reasonable to suppose he would not let so much as a month elapse without taking some action.

We sought to account for the delay. Muriel thought it possible her brother had assumed her father's prolonged silence to mean simply that he had decided to lengthen his stay on the island, thus tacitly giving him power to act for him in the transaction referred to. They were to have met in Chicago. Not finding his father there at

the time set and knowing he could not communicate with him upon the island, Dudley might have concluded for both the business that brought him there, and left immediately upon one of his frequent trips into the lumber regions of the Northwest. If that were the case, it was uncertain when we would see him. His business interests sometimes kept him buried in the wilderness for more than a month at a time.

Meantime I had got the horse in condition and would have tried to find the passage, but Muriel would not hear of it. Suppose something happened to me, what would she do alone on the island? she asked me. I knew indeed that danger attended my proposed quest, and that what she dreaded might happen. Therefore I abandoned my purpose. It was best that we wait, even though we might have to wait a long time.

To me the days seemed to fly. I could have wished no greater happiness than to remain there with Muriel for ever.

We knew our danger and that made it less. We were in love with each other, and not only were we aware of our own feelings, but each knew those of the other. Without spoken word, we tacitly admitted the situation. Nothing better for us could have happened than that outburst of passion on the

evening succeeding Carrington's suicide, followed, as it was, by our kneeling side by side and imploring divine aid in the fight against our own natures. It showed us the extent of our peril as nothing else could, and how only we might hope to come through it unscathed. Our prayers were never uttered together again, at least knowingly; but I am sure that separately we sent up the same appeal many times. For myself, not a morning, not a night but I repeated it, and it gave me a strength I could nowhere else have found. With her, I know it was likewise. We understood what each was doing and that gave us reciprocal confidence. I told her delicately but plainly of Carrington's impudent assertion that we would follow in the footsteps of him and the woman who had passed as his wife; of his determination to entrap us into that course; of his schemes to that end and of the cool satisfaction with which he had spoken of such a consummation as assured. I knew it would help her, as it had me. Never would we consent to accomplish that hateful parallel. Knowing, therefore, and admitting our danger, yet trusting in God and in each other for the strength to resist it, we faced our situation with an advantage which otherwise we could not have possessed. And con-

fident in our strength, we frankly joyed in each other's society.

What a paradise did the island become! A new glory was upon the trees and flowers, the sunlight was brighter, the moon and stars shone with added charm. Upon every moment of our time there I could linger in raptures; but to those who do not share my feelings the recital would be tedious. Therefore I will not tell in detail our daily life after Carrington's suicide. It began, however, at Muriel's request, with a trip to the lake which again I dragged unsuccessfully with the best means at my disposal for some trace of the body of her father. Yet, like the fruitless search in the swamp, the effort, conscientiously performed, seemed to give her great relief. Then we settled down in the huts to wait.

We had enough flour, meal, and other necessities to last many weeks yet. There was plenty of ammunition for the guns, and the supply of game and fish was inexhaustible. Clothes would not become a serious problem; for, should necessity drive us, each had a double supply to draw from. Thus our bodily needs were provided for. We took long walks together through the most beautiful parts of the island; we plucked the lovely wildflowers, and, bringing them back in armfuls,

made fairy bowers of the shacks. In the long afternoons we took turns at reading aloud from Muriel's books. Sometimes she would half close the volume she held, pausing to comment on the story and to ask my opinion; and then, blushing and stammering, I would betray I had been listening only to the low, sweet music of her voice. Perhaps she would blush a little too; then we would laugh and she would resume her reading.

How happy we were! I had not thought it in human power to attain to such heights. I forgot the wretched past; I gave no thought to the future, when I must wake from my dream; I lived only in the glorious present. To see her, to be in her presence, to worship her, to read now and then in her eyes the story of my own enthronement in her heart, was a delight that heaven could hardly equal. I loved her most for her goodness, her strength, her bravery in this great struggle. She seemed a puzzling mixture of the divine and human. Infinitely above me, there was yet in her composition some of the earth of my own. Through instruments such as she, a wise and loving Father seeks to uplift fallen man. They are above yet of us, and being of us gain, because of common sympathies and common temptations, a hold which

else would be denied, drawing us up to admire, be guided by and to emulate what is holy about them.

The golden days sped by. Loving yet understanding, respecting each other, we carefully guarded our actions and tongues lest they betray us to our eternal undoing — guarded them with unremitting vigilance, with success, with signal success, I say, till that fateful night in early June when we sat together by the brook and Muriel sang the languorous love ditty to the accompaniment of her guitar.

The day had been very warm. We had not stirred from the camp, but all the afternoon reclined in the shade, by turns reading aloud and conversing on many topics. With evening a cool breeze sprang up, blowing out to the ocean. We went for a walk. The new moon was shining and the myriad stars added their light undimmed by a single cloud. We did not go far. The little stream was close to the camp, and, when we reached it, we selected the first convenient place on its banks and sat down, as if by mutual consent. I carried Muriel's guitar. I had seen it in her shack soon after my arrival on the island and was told by Carrington that she sang exquisitely, accompanying herself upon it; but I had never

heard her. Now, while she settled herself, I tuned the instrument and presently handed it to her.

Very beautiful she looked as she took it, sat thoughtful a moment and then began idly to finger the strings. Another concert was in progress. The frogs, the katydids. the owls were blending their voices in the distant swamps and in the trees around. To-night there was nothing weird about this chorus, as when I sat watching by the dead body of the woman. It was soft, melodious, dreamy. Out of the thousands upon thousands of choristers came a feathered principal with formidable challenge — a mocking bird, who, perching upon a limb near where we sat, poured forth a lay he must have stolen from the angels while eavesdropping just without the gates of paradise. But I thought I knew of strains sweeter than his, and when he ceased, I turned to the girl at my side and spoke in a low voice.

"Go on; shame him into future silence."

"You mean frighten him away with harsh discord."

"No; you can excel him, I am sure."

She laughed softly; then striking a chord upon the instrument, sang in her rich contralto a few lines of a sweet old love song. Every nerve in

my being thrilled at the melody of her words. I sat enthralled.

Suddenly she broke off with a nervous little laugh. "I think I prefer something more cheerful, don't you?"

"No. Why don't you finish it?"

She moved uneasily. "Do you want me to?"

"Very much."

"No," she answered after a moment's hesitation; "I don't think I can." She put down the guitar as if to emphasize her decision.

I sighed deeply and sat silent. Her face was averted. She seemed absorbed in a scrutiny of the heavens.

"I wish I could remain and die upon this island." I breathed the words half aloud, half to myself. But she heard, and I saw her start. Then she tried to turn the matter off lightly.

"Are you so fond of this hermit existence? Well, for my part, I am glad Dudley can't be much longer in coming."

"Can you say that?" I asked, reproachfully.

"Why not?" she demanded, with affected unconcern, picking up the guitar again and toying with the strings to conceal her real agitation.

"Because you know it will separate us for ever."

I reached for her hand, but she escaped me and rose quickly.

"I — I am not well; let us go back to the camp." Her manner was agitated; she half turned and took a halting, uncertain step. Quickly I was by her side and seized the coveted hand, which now she suffered me to retain. I felt it trembling in mine. Her head was turned away, her eyes were upon the ground.

"Muriel, I have been so happy here. I never really knew before what happiness was. I cannot bear to lose you. I cannot bear to think we are soon to part, never, perhaps, to see each other again. Don't say you are anxious for that."

She made no reply, but struggled slightly to release her hand.

"Won't you take back those words?" I pleaded, bending toward her.

She uttered a sharp cry of distress. "Don't," she implored, "don't make me do that!"

"Yes," I urged, with a sudden, fervid vehemence, "tell me you are sorry to leave me; tell me just this once that you love me! that you love me! that you love me!"

"No! no! no!" she cried desperately. "I will not! — you must not ask that!"

"But you do!" I declared triumphantly; "your eyes have told me!"

She turned her head further from me. I heard her quick breathing. I saw her bosom heaving tempestuously.

"Muriel!" I cried, brokenly; and clasped her, unresisting, to my heart.

Almost instantly I released her with a startled exclamation, as a sudden and furious alarm was sounded by Brutus nearly at our feet. In an interval between the dog's barking, there came floating to me the sound of a distant halloo, repeated thrice and seemingly made by four or five voices in concert.

Dudley had come!

I looked at Muriel. Apparently she had not heard. She stood with both hands to her face, weeping as I had seen her on that other night when passion had well-nigh had her way with us. I went to her.

"Muriel, did you hear?"

She seemed ignorant that I stood beside her.

I laid my arm gently upon her arm.

"Muriel, Dudley has come."

She dropped her hands and stared at me, dazed.

"Your brother has come," I repeated. "There

are others with him. I heard them shout a moment ago."

As if in corroboration the hail sounded again, much nearer, and Brutus, answering with a renewed burst, ran toward the south, whence it came, and disappeared in the hummock.

"Thank God! oh, thank God! thank God!" Muriel was upon her knees, her hands clasped, her fervent, tear-stained countenance raised to the stars.

I retired a few paces, my heart oppressed with unutterable sadness. Once more the shout rose. This time I felt constrained to answer.

Then came a chorus of joyous cries.

Again I turned my eyes toward Muriel, seeing her through a mist of tears. She had risen. I approached her.

"They are almost at the shacks. We must go and meet them." Then sadly, humbly: "Can you forgive me?"

"Yes! yes! let us go!" eagerly. She took a forward step, but, arrested by the misery, the utter despair in my face, came back, and, taking one of my hands, held it between hers while she looked gravely, steadily into my eyes.

"You could not help it — neither of us could. God has heard our prayers and saved us."

A moment we stood. Then she made a slight motion as if to go, but my grip closed upon her hand, detaining her.

"We are never to see each other again," I murmured. "We must — we must —" My voice choked; I was silent.

She seemed to hesitate. Then, as the voices of the rescuers sounded on the border of the hummock mingled with the joyous yelping of Brutus, she suddenly drew very near me.

"Mr. Lindsay — David!"

My heart gave a great bound.

"I can say what I dared not say a moment ago. In spite of the great sorrow that, as you know, has pressed upon me, you have made these last weeks the happiest of my life. You — you are not the only one whose heart is wrung by this separation. But it *must* be — you know that. We must not meet any more. You must never try to see me. It would be best if we could forget; but we cannot — I cannot, I know. David! hear me say it for the last, the only time: I love you — I love you with all my heart — it — it is because I love you so dearly that I am glad they have come to take us away."

Her voice died into a whisper. She hid her face upon my breast. Again I strained her to me,

kissing her hair and then her lips which she held up to me. Oh, God! I felt it was for the last time! My heart was broken.

"Father! Muriel!" came from the camp.

I mastered my emotion.

"This way! We are coming!"

Cheer after cheer answered me. Out of the thicket into the moonlight emerged several human figures running toward us.

With Muriel I advanced to meet them.

CHAPTER XXI

FAREWELL TO THE ISLAND — AND MURIEL!

"MR. LINDSAY, may I speak to you a moment? Mr. Martin, will you accompany us? — the others will attend to the packing. We will start as soon as it is light and Barney has got us something to eat."

Dudley led the way into the shack I lately had occupied. I followed with Mr. Martin, a gray-haired gentleman of benevolent aspect, who had been a warm personal friend of the elder Hampton and who was god-father to Muriel. A candle on a shelf against the wall dimly lighted the interior. Dudley sat down on a camp-stool near it, his brows knit in thought. Mr. Martin and I also took seats. While we waited for our companion to begin the conversation I had my first good look at him.

He seemed eight or ten years older than I — about thirty-five I judged. His figure was tall and athletic, his features handsome — enough like Muriel's to show their relationship. There was an

air of activity and decision about him. He raised his dark eyes and glanced at Mr. Martin, then at me.

"Gentlemen, many things must be decided before we return to Miami. We start, as you know, in a few hours. I have asked you here to confer with me."

Mr. Martin nodded his acquiescence. I too indicated my willingness to be of what assistance I could. Dudley's eyes lingered upon me with obvious embarrassment. He seemed at a loss how to begin.

"I owe you thanks, Mr. Lindsay," he said at last, "for the pains you took and the risks you ran to deliver to justice my poor father's murderer. Few men would have had the courage to act as you did."

"I agree with you," was the hearty declaration of the older gentleman, as he rose and came to me with hand extended. "Lindsay, you are a brave boy; I congratulate you on your game fight."

"I am only sorry it was unsuccessful."

"The fellow killed himself about the middle of April?" It was Dudley who asked the question.

"Yes."

"That was two months ago."

He had followed Mr. Martin's example in giving me his hand, though his manner was constrained. As I answered his question, he stood facing me, remaining thus as he made the foregoing comment. He frowned thoughtfully, his eyes bent on the ground.

"Two months," he muttered again, and, turning abruptly, walked to the opposite side of the shack.

I understood and sympathized. There was an awkward pause. Impulsively I spoke.

"Mr. Hampton, I am glad of this opportunity to speak to you before your father's, your own and your sister's friend." I stopped short, sorry I had begun, aware I must now go on, yet keenly alive to the delicacy of the situation.

Both gentlemen were regarding me attentively. Dudley, breathing hard, nodded for me to resume.

I hesitated in an effort to choose my words, and, failing to find those suitable, burst out suddenly:

"I would to God you would accept the simple truth as I tell it! I would to God you could know as I do that girl to be as spotless as an angel!"

I stopped, abashed at my own vehemence. Silence filled the hut. I heard the ticking of the elder man's watch as he stood near me.

"Lindsay, I believe you!" Mr. Martin was

again shaking my hand with redoubled warmth. Tears were in his eyes. "God bless the girl — and you, boy! Dudley," turning half-playfully to his companion, "if you doubt what he says, damned if you need call me friend any longer!"

"I place myself in your position, Mr. Hampton," I began; but smilingly he put up his hand to stop me. His doubts were set at rest.

"Lindsay, I don't know what I can say to —"

"Say nothing," I advised. "I can appreciate what you feel without it. We understand each other."

"Good boy!" said Mr. Martin, patting me approvingly on the shoulder.

"You're a noble fellow, Lindsay," declared Dudley, and turned away to hide his emotion. His habits of thought and action enabled him to conquer it quickly and he addressed Mr. Martin as I was about to speak.

"Was I right not to ask Carson to this conference?"

"Why should you?" demanded the other with some heat. "It is none of his affair. That would have shown little consideration for your sister."

"That was the way I looked at it," declared Dudley.

"There are no others besides Mr. Carson and the two negroes?" I asked the question.

"No; but the whole town of Miami is agog waiting for our return." He shifted uneasily on the stool he had resumed.

"I must not go back with you."

He looked up with obvious relief.

"Frankly, Mr. Lindsay, that was troubling me."

"I know. The world would never accept the truth as I have told it to you. Believe me, I would rather die twenty deaths than cause one breath of scandal to be uttered against your sister's name. My presence on the island must be known to no person who has not already unavoidably learned it."

"But how are we to manage that?" Mr. Martin was eyeing me curiously.

"May I make a suggestion?" asked Dudley, addressing me.

"Certainly."

"Why not leave us when we emerge from the swamps, make your way to Cocoanut Grove and pass us as a hunter returning from the region farther south?"

I nodded quick assent.

"Very good; but how are we to account for

events on the island in which you, Mr. Lindsay, played such an important part?" asked Mr. Martin.

"We can arrange a story now to suit our purpose," answered Dudley.

"Exactly," I agreed.

"Suppose, Mr. Lindsay, that you suggest the outlines?"

I nodded my consent and sat thoughtful a moment.

"The woman died of heart-failure, as actually happened, but let the date of her death be fixed at less than a week ago. The delay in returning to Miami was caused by her illness. Your father, Mr. Hampton, discovered that Carrington was the embezzler, Sanford, after the woman's death by means of the contents of the satchel and the paper, which Sanford had managed to filch from him on the way to the island and which he, your father, had not seen till he found it with the money in the satchel. Make that part much as it actually was, only letting your father's name be used where mine belongs. After the discovery your father threatens Sanford with arrest. They quarrel and exchange shots. Sanford is killed outright and your father mortally wounded. He dies just prior to or directly after your arrival

here. Your sister's remaining alone on the island two or three days will be readily accepted."

"What becomes of the horses?" queried Mr. Martin.

"Strayed into the swamps; some of them possibly bitten by poisonous reptiles."

"And my father's body?" asked Dudley in a low tone.

"Buried till you are prepared to return and take it away. Allow only those who are here now to come back with you. Others need not know that you drag the lake for it."

"Yet what if some officer of the law insists upon coming to investigate the death of Carrington? You know we could not well refuse this."

I considered.

"It might be your father and Sanford fought hand to hand, your father's weapon a knife — you see? At any rate a few weeks will wipe out all evidence as to the kind of a wound Sanford died of. In the officer's presence, fail to find the grave of your father. After being wounded and killing Sanford (whom of course *you* bury), your father and sister have started south for the trail leading from the island. Somewhere in the wilds your father has fallen, there perished and there you found him with your sister and buried him on the

spot. But you become bewildered on your return and cannot locate it. You leave the island without doing so. Later you return without the officer and drag the lake. But," I added, gently, "I feel compelled to say you will find that task fruitless, as I have tried it myself, though of course you will be better prepared."

We sat silent, thoughtful. Dudley was the first to speak.

"There is one other thing," he said with visible reluctance.

"What is that?"

"The money."

"True," assented Mr. Martin. "When you return that to the Chicago company, you must make your explanations and then your presence on the island will become known."

I brought the satchel from a corner of the shack and placed it on the floor between them.

"One of you shall return it for me," I said.

"Lindsay, I thank you," said Dudley, warmly. "You have made all easy. I owe you more than I can hope to repay." He rose, glanced at his watch and replacing it in his pocket, motioned towards the satchel. "I will ask you to take charge of that, Mr. Martin. In a little over two

hours we will start. I must talk with my sister and with Carson." He left the shack.

It was almost at hand — my parting with Muriel! I sat disconsolate, forgetful of the presence of the good old gentleman till I felt his hand laid affectionately upon my head.

"Don't think me impertinent," he pleaded, timidly. "I'm a lonely old man and would give all I possess for a son like you. You have acted nobly. But something is troubling you?"

"Yes; but it can't be helped."

He seemed to hesitate. Then gently:

"I have seen what Dudley has not."

"What do you mean?" was my sharp command.

"Come, you know. But why need you despair? Carson and she are not yet engaged and, if I can read eyes correctly, you have the advantage. In a most trying situation you have acted a manly, honest, clean part, and, with a girl like my dear god-daughter, that ought to win."

I laughed bitterly and looking up encountered his eyes full of surprise and inquiry.

"You do not know I am married," I said, as I rose from my stool.

"Married!" he echoed in astonishment.

"Yes." I turned abruptly and started toward

the door, but just as suddenly changed my mind and came back to his side.

"Mr. Martin," I said earnestly, looking straight into his eyes, "I don't want you to think ill of me. I will guard my feelings better after this. I have cause for being unhappy, but I will not again parade my despair. My position has been even more trying than you suppose. But I want to hear you say again that you believe me to have acted a good part. I want to feel that your confidence is unshaken — that it always will be. Won't you repeat what you said?"

I knew he sought to fathom my soul by the steady scrutiny he sent into my eyes and I held them fixed that he might see to the depths.

He caressingly placed a hand on each of my shoulders.

"My boy, I repeat it all — even the wish for such a son!"

With the Everglades behind us they were telling me good bye. Outwardly I was calm. In turn Dudley and Mr. Martin shook my hand with cordial good-will and hopes earnestly expressed that we might see each other again soon and often. Young Carson said something to the same purpose, though somewhat perfunctorily. Then with

a smiling countenance though wildly beating heart, I stepped quickly to where Muriel sat on her horse.

She, as I, had schooled herself for this ordeal. She was very pale with dark circles beneath her eyes; but that might come from our exhausting, all-day ride among the swamps, and the sleep she had lost; for none of us had retired the night previous. She held out her hand with the manner of one saying good bye to a friend she would see the next day; but I knew she regarded it as a last farewell — one quick glance of her eye told me that and made it necessary for me to summon all my resolution to prevent breaking down.

"Good bye, Mr. Lindsay. Again, thank you, thank you very, very much for your care of me while on the island."

"Indeed, I am glad I could be of service," I said, lightly. "Good bye, and a safe, pleasant trip home."

I sat on my horse looking after them. Now and then one of them — but not Muriel — turned to wave a parting salute. Each time I responded, but my eyes scarcely left the dear, graceful figure in the blue jacket and skirt with the dainty white cap crowning a wealth of auburn hair. At last

the little cavalcade disappeared among the trees and underbrush. I strained my eyes and caught one fleeting glimpse of blue between the thickening leaves. She was gone!

A moment of intense, excruciating agony, as if some one had driven a knife deep into my bosom; then a weak, childish inclination to throw myself upon the neck of my horse and give way to tears. But, gritting my teeth, I fought it firmly, successfully, and, seizing the rein, waked the mettle of my weary steed with the spur and headed him in the direction which Dudley told me I must take to reach Cocoanut Grove.

CHAPTER XXII

TOM DELIVERS HIS MESSAGE

My train reached Louisville at two o'clock in the morning. I crossed Broadway, engaged a room at the Victoria, and, going directly to it, threw myself across the bed without removing my clothes. My brother Ralph was back from college now, no doubt — perhaps he had been recalled prematurely because of my unexplained absence. I would find him, Effie, and Aunt Margaret at my home; but I wanted to see Tom before anybody. He could best tell me of events in Tampa immediately following my departure, what had been the final verdict about my disappearance, what steps Effie had taken and what situation I now had to face.

I made no attempt to sleep — the effort would have been vain. When it was light, I rose, left the hotel and, after a cup of coffee secured at the lunch-counter of the Union Station across the street, walked briskly to Tom's modest, red-brick residence.

I looked at my watch. It was just six o'clock. But Tom was an early riser and I probably would find him up. A negro boy answered my ring and, inviting me into the reception hall, disappeared a moment later with the little slip of paper on which I had written my name.

Almost immediately I heard hurried footsteps and Tom burst through the portières at the end of the hall, pulling up abruptly at sight of me and staring as if to assure himself that it was no mistake.

"David! My God, man! are you returned from the dead?"

"No, Tom; it's David in the flesh," I smilingly assured him, as I advanced with outstretched hand.

Our greeting was most affectionate on both sides. Tom and I are like brothers; we have been inseparable since we were ten years old. As soon as his first great burst of surprise and joy gave him the opportunity to think, he began to deluge me with questions.

"Where in heaven's name have you been? Why didn't you let us hear from you? Why didn't you communicate with Lumley? What was your reason for —"

I put up my hand in a manner that silenced him at once.

"Tom, I have been cut off absolutely from

communication with the world ever since the morning you saw me leave Tampa in the smack."

He stared. "What do you mean? Where have you been?"

I hesitated. "You were at breakfast when I came, were you not?"

"I had finished. But you?" He took a step toward the portières.

"No, no — I have had all I want."

"Then come to my den," was his eager invitation. "I am the only one at home."

Directly I found myself occupying my bachelor friend's easy chair, while he, after carefully locking the door behind us, advanced to the table by which I sat, his countenance keenly expectant, exhibiting signs of suppressed excitement.

"Now, old fellow, I'm not sure I understood you. You actually mean to say — "

"Exactly what I did say, Tom, — that for several months I have been completely isolated from all my former friends or acquaintances."

His astonishment held him speechless. Then:

"The deuce! But where? why? what have you been doing?"

"Tom," I answered, gravely, "I cannot tell you."

He dropped into a chair facing me, his blank,

open-mouthed wonder so ludicrous I could not repress a smile, though next instant I was again serious enough.

"There are circumstances, Tom, which seal my lips. Even for you, from whom this is my first secret, they must not open. Of course my absence must be accounted for in some way, and I have invented a tale about being swept out to sea, overtaken in a storm, picked up by a foreign vessel bound for some out-of-the-way port, compelled to make the voyage, from which I am just returned — the details of this story we will discuss later; for I want you to help me circulate it. But never for an instant did I think of imposing upon my old friend with any such fabrication. If I can't tell you the truth, Tom, I will tell you nothing, and it pains me deeply to say that I must remain silent. You won't think hard of me, will you? If you could know, if you — "

He stopped me with a gesture.

"Don't say another word, Dave; it's all right."

I leaned over and patted his knee affectionately.

"Thank you, Tom. I feel ashamed that I must ask *you* so many questions and can answer none; but there are such weighty reasons for my silence — "

"Haven't I said it's all right?" He settled himself in his chair. "Fire away! What do you want to know?"

"Everything," I announced, eagerly. "Begin at the start and tell me all."

He regarded me with a puzzled air.

"When did you arrive, Dave?"

"At two o'clock this morning. I remained at a hotel till I fancied you were out of bed. Then I came directly here."

"But — ?" His perplexity seemed to deepen as his scrutiny of my countenance continued.

"What is it?" I asked, uneasily.

"Surely you have written or telegraphed to somebody and received some response; or have seen some friend who could inform you — "

"Tom, I know absolutely nothing that has transpired in my family or in my affairs since you and I parted in Tampa," I said impressively.

"Great God!" He sat looking fixedly at me, his eyes distended, his features ashen. Then he rose quickly, walked excitedly to the window, turned abruptly and came back to the table where he stood regarding me in a way that filled me with wonder and apprehension.

"Tom, what has happened?"

"Why — why — "

"Tell me at once, please." I rose. "Is it Effie? — Gridley?"

He came and put his hand affectionately upon my shoulder.

"Dave, my poor Dave, you must prepare yourself —"

"I *am* prepared — go on! go on!"

He drew a long breath.

"Effie eloped with Gridley the night you left Tampa!"

I thought I had nerved myself to hear anything, but I dropped back into my chair, stunned. Tom's voice, as he expressed his sympathy, sounded far off.

"Tell me all about it," I at last managed to say.

My friend seated himself on the corner of the table.

"You remember when they separated you and Gridley, taking you by force through the hotel lobby out to the grounds?"

I nodded.

"Well, I and others remained with Gridley urging him to avoid further trouble by leaving Tampa that night. At first he would not listen, and I was surprised when at last he appeared suddenly to change his mind and consented, giving as his reason his desire to save Effie from unpleasant

notoriety. We had told him the matter as it stood could be hushed up. I took measures which I believed would prevent knowledge of the scene in the ball-room from spreading beyond those who actually witnessed it; then I came to you and tried to induce you to take Effie away the following morning, telling you that your foe was already beyond your reach.

"No doubt you will recall my being summoned by one of the hotel clerks. He came to tell me that Gridley and Effie had been seen a moment before leaving the hotel together. It seems he managed to communicate with her as soon as I left him. There is evidence that an elopement previously had been planned — that Gridley was there at Effie's invitation — that they had agreed upon all but the date. Effie, made desperate by the events of the evening, cared no longer to postpone that. I thought there was time to stop them — to make one last effort to bring your poor wife to her senses. The train had left the hotel; but they had driven across the town to board it at the station. I took our friend, Markham — we entered a cab and tried to overtake them. I asked you to remain in the hotel yard till I returned, not daring to tell you what had happened; for you would have insisted upon accompanying us, and I knew you

and Gridley must not meet then. But Markham and I reached the station too late; the train had gone and they upon it. We hastily returned and tried to find you; for now indeed we must let you know. We found no trace of you till we saw you putting off in the smack. I tried to tell you what had happened, but you did not seem to hear. Markham recognized your companion as a dissipated fisherman of Sarasota, whose face was familiar around the saloons of Tampa, where he frequently came to indulge in protracted sprees. When the man's body was washed ashore near Sarasota after the storm of the night following, we supposed you had shared his fate."

I threw my arms upon the table and hid my face in them with a groan.

"I wish to God you had been right!"

Tom was silent and I knew his emotions were too much for him. Presently I raised my head and addressed him with a sort of desperate calmness.

"Thank you, Tom; I know you feel for me and I appreciate it — from my heart I do! But you have more to tell me. I want to hear it."

He walked to the window and stood looking out, his back to me. Then, quite collected, he returned and resumed his seat at the table.

"David, we know what inspired Gridley to commit that villainy."

"It was because Effie jilted him to marry me."

"Then you ought to be prepared to hear what he did," said Tom, gently.

I scrutinized his features.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"I mean that after betraying her and heaping scandal upon your name, he deserted his poor victim."

I sat silent, how long I do not know. If Tom spoke again, I did not hear him. At last I quietly stood up. I will not now stop to argue the right or wrong of my resolve. I was born and reared where there is held to be but a single way of dealing with one who wrongs us thus.

"David."

I faced my friend composedly.

"David, I know your thoughts; but it cannot be."

I only looked my question.

"He is beyond your reach; he has gone where he must account for his crime."

"Dead?"

"Yes. His family cast him off after this disgrace. Ostracized by all his friends he set out for the Klondike. On the way he was shot in a

drunken quarrel in a gambling hell in Seattle. It was proved that he was the aggressor and his slayer was acquitted."

Neither spoke for several minutes. Finally I asked:

"And Effie?"

"Nobody knows."

My head dropped to the table, before me, buried upon my arm.

"Oh, Tom! I shall never be able to look anybody in the face again!"

No mortal but Tom could have given me the strength and courage I received in that trying hour. Now my friend was hearing me announce my purpose.

"I want to act with absolute justice, Tom."

"I know that."

"Have you ever reflected that but for me Effie might have married Gridley and perhaps have been happy?"

"You did not know they were engaged."

"No; but I was to blame as much as she for our hasty marriage and should share equally the burden of our mistake."

"Had she conducted herself as you did after discovering that mistake its results might not have proved so disastrous."

"I want to forget that, Tom. I want only to remember that I may have ruined her life as she has mine. Effie's conduct has made it impossible for me to live with her again. But, though she has given me the all-sufficient cause, I am not going to divorce her. What atonement is in my power I will make. If she continues to sin it shall not be from necessity. I intend to find her and tell her that — to make my purpose plain to her."

Tom sat thoughtful, his eyes upon the floor. He cleared his throat twice, but did not speak. At last, softly, his face turned from me:

"Dave, old fellow, when will you begin your search?"

"I am going to New York to-morrow, Tom," was my firm response.

CHAPTER XXIII

MY SEARCH IS ENDED

A SOILED letter written in lead pencil on cheap paper lies before me. I shall never forget the day I received it. My efforts to gain a clew to my wife's whereabouts had failed. For more than three months I had devoted all my energy to that task; every means at my disposal I had used, but without success. Most of my time I spent in New York or in other large cities where from time to time I deceived myself with the belief that I had discovered some trace of her. On one of my brief trips home I found this letter waiting for me.

As soon as I saw the writing, I knew it was from her, though plainly the hand that traced it was weak and trembling. I tore open the envelope with a presentiment of what it contained. The letter was dated from a city far west of the Mississippi. Now I read it again.

"David: I want to hear you say that you forgive me. Come soon, or it will be too late. Effie."

In a few hours I was on my way to her. But

she was destined never to know I responded to her appeal. When I reached the cheap boarding-house for theatrical people indicated in her letter, she was dead.

They told me she had expected me — "a friend" — a name she would not give. When she closed her eyes in that last sleep, her final words were a request that she be awakened the instant I reached her bedside. She never doubted I would come.

I heard her sad story. A member of the chorus in an obscure opera company, she had fallen ill in this far western town. There she was deserted, while the troupe moved on to fill an engagement at another place. The mistress of the house, a kind-hearted soul, had cared for her as best she could. She told me Effie did not expect from the first anything but death, and that she welcomed its coming, praying only that it might be delayed till after she had seen me. I asked about the letter. She had written it, and with her own hand given it to the postman the day after she was taken ill. The landlady had not seen the address; she never discovered my real name. Effie was known to her as Louise St. Clair.

With this clew I subsequently learned more. Louise St. Clair had sought employment from the

managers of opera companies in New York soon after Gridley's disappearance from Louisville. It was then an easy matter to trace her course. My poor wife's voice was good and she might have made her way as a singer, but the weight of her shame lay too heavy upon her. To deaden memory she resorted to drugs and was soon reduced to earning her bread as a member of the wretched travelling company which had left her dying. As I looked upon her still features, I could scarcely believe that only a few months had made the frightful change in her appearance. Hardly a trace of her former beauty remained. Her face seemed that of a woman fifty years old. She was just twenty-five.

A few days after my search had thus ended, I arrived in Louisville with poor Effie's remains. Very quietly we laid them in the beautiful cemetery of Cave Hill. Only Tom, Ralph, Aunt Margaret, Lumley, and one or two others knew. I sent word to Effie's uncle in St. Louis; but he was not present. Later he wrote to explain that he was ill.

God will judge us all. He knows how earnestly I sought to atone for any act of mine that might in any way have been responsible for Effie's downfall. And He knows too that before the end there was nothing but forgiveness and pity in my heart.

Her punishment on earth was severe. May she rest in peace.

At last I was free; but too late, it seemed, for happiness. When I returned to Louisville with poor Effie's body I found a letter from Dudley Hampton awaiting me. It was most cordial in its tone but it destroyed the hope which I had hardly dared to acknowledge to myself but which I now realized had persistently endured in my heart. For the letter contained an allusion to Muriel, coupling her name with that of young Carson in such a way as to lead me to believe that his suit had been accepted and that Dudley approved of the match.

I did not blame Muriel. I remembered her sweet avowal to me, and on that I had based my hope; but I reflected that under the circumstances it was easy for her to be misled regarding her real sentiments. The situation was extraordinary. Undeniably I had claims to her gratitude. My love for her was apparent in my watchful care, my consideration. Then there was the circumstance of our isolation together, and her pity, knowing my unhappiness and its cause. How natural she should fancy herself in love with me, as she knew I was with her! But now we had been separated for many

months. The days passed alone with me on the island were but a memory. She had had time to reflect and saw, doubtless, that what she supposed to be love was merely a blending of respect, gratitude and sympathy. She was back in the world now and must face its problems. It seemed best that she should marry. Carson was a worthy young man of excellent family, handsome, wealthy, in every way a suitable match for Muriel. And besides he really loved her, and for several years had sought to make himself acceptable to her.

I loved her with all my heart; there had been no change in my sentiments. But clearly she was never to be mine. I turned doggedly to my work, determined to think of nothing else.

Men and women nowhere are entirely wretched or entirely happy except in novels. I soon came to derive genuine pleasure from my occupation. I became fired with an ambition to make a name in the commercial world, to best in fair fight all competitors of our house, to seek new fields for conquest. By day and night I laboured and planned, finding a gratifying reward in the success which step by step I was attaining. But I could not safely allow myself relaxation. If my mind was idle, it was sure to occupy itself with forbidden subjects. Some days I was utterly miserable.

Then I asked myself to what end was I striving so diligently? Of what good were my triumphs in the world of affairs? There was nobody to share them with me, nobody to feel an unselfish pride in them. These sad hours would come, struggle as I might, but I shortened them by plunging with resolution and redoubled energy back into the business of the house.

Ever since our departure from the island, at frequent intervals, I had received letters from Mr. Martin, and once when I was absent on my search for Effie he had called at my office in Louisville. He never mentioned Muriel except now and then to say that he had seen her and that she was well. I had frequent invitations to visit him at Nashville, but I always pleaded the pressure of my business duties as an excuse for not accepting them. Both Mr. Martin and Dudley had known of my search for my wife, doubtless through the Armstrongs, but none of these, so far as I knew, had learned of its final results.

One night several months after Effie's death I had remained late at my desk looking over some important correspondence. About eight o'clock a telephoned message from my house informed me that a gentleman was on his way to my office, but I was not able to get his name. I notified the

watchman and in about twenty minutes heard the heavy front door open and shut. I rose from my desk and advanced to the office door to meet my unknown guest.

Mr. Martin entered. I was, indeed, delighted, and he, too, appeared greatly pleased; and yet, I thought, something less cordial than he had given me the right to expect.

I inquired after his health. He had been well, he told me — then raising his eyes with keen scrutiny to my face:

"And yours?"

"Oh, excellent!"

He shook his head, looking troubled. "You don't show it. You seem thin and run down."

"Working a little hard; that is all."

He continued to regard me with that troubled expression and, somewhat embarrassed, I ventured in as careless a tone as I could, to ask about our friends.

"Muriel, you mean?" he questioned, looking straight into my eyes.

"Yes; and Dudley."

"I have not seen Dudley since you have, and I seldom exchange letters with him. I am sorry to say Muriel is not as well as I would like to see her."

"I am distressed to hear it," I said without raising my eyes, which had dropped before his steady gaze.

Mr. Martin coughed, rather drily, I thought, and was silent. But it was he who reopened the conversation.

"Lindsay, I supposed you'd have come to Nashville before this."

There was no use in affecting to misunderstand him.

"Surely you know why I haven't come," I answered in a low voice.

"I thought I did until I chanced upon a bit of information from my friend, Horace Baird, when I was in St. Louis a month or two ago."

I started. Baird was Effie's uncle to whom I had written. Mr. Martin went on.

"Later I discovered Muriel had learned the same thing long before, from St. Louis friends of hers, who doubtless had it from the same source as I. But my goddaughter does not suspect that I know of her information and —"

"But you're mistaken," I interrupted. "I should have come to Nashville at once only —" I sighed and was silent.

"Only what?" queried Mr. Martin, bluntly.

"You don't mean you are ignorant that Miss

Hampton is to marry young Carson?" I asked incredulously.

He whistled in astonishment.

"Where did you get that idea?"

"From Dudley's letter."

"You have heard from him recently?"

"No; it was several months ago."

"Carson has been married to another girl for three months."

I could only stare in amazement.

Mr. Martin laughed. "Why, Lindsay, she had given him to understand there was no hope long before that expedition to the Everglades. He was the most persistent fellow I ever saw. Dudley favoured him and, I think, he believed that in the end Muriel would see the advantages of the match. It *would* have been a good one, as the world looks at such things. But my dear goddaughter is a woman who knows her mind. Her word is not to be taken lightly. She did not love Carson and that settled his fate. My boy, oughtn't you to have known she could never love him?"

I did not reply. My heart was beating wildly.

Mr. Martin leaned over and laid his hand upon my knee.

"And that is *all* that has kept you from Nashville?"

Notwithstanding his emphasis, I regarded him in silent perplexity.

"I mean have your own sentiments, as expressed to me on the island, changed?" he queried, gently.

"No! no!" was my emphatic assurance; "they can never change."

He leaped up with a joyful exclamation and slapped me on the back.

"My boy, you're going back to Nashville with me."

"To Nashville?"

"Certainly. I've wanted you to visit me ever since I met you. Now's a good time. You're worked down and need the rest. I won't take a refusal."

"Mr. Martin," I said, slowly, "are you sure she would welcome me?"

He burst out laughing.

"Only one way to convince yourself, and the sooner the better. When can you come?"

"To-morrow — to-night — any time!"

"Well, let us say to-morrow."

And so it was decided. I took Mr. Martin home with me. Before we retired I thanked Mr. Martin for coming.

"David, I have no relatives. You two are the dearest people in the world to me. I saw some-

thing was wrong between you, and, being a meddlesome old fellow, I determined to find out what it was. Perhaps I was a little provoked with you, but —"

"Oh, I forgive you for that!" I broke in, laughing.

"I'm glad you do," he declared, echoing my mirth. Then earnestly: "But I was about to say that I don't deserve any credit for trying to straighten this out, because, after all, it's from a selfish motive. Why, it would make *me* the very happiest man alive to bring you two together!"

"No," I objected; "you might be the next happiest, but I would be the happiest."

"I don't know about that — upon my soul I don't!" declared my generous friend.

CHAPTER XXIV

MURIEL'S ANSWER

We reached Nashville early the next afternoon and drove at once to Mr. Martin's bachelor apartments on Capitol Hill. Thence my friend telephoned to Muriel, asking permission to call that evening and bring "a friend." His request was readily granted.

We dined at the Maxwell House and took our seats in Mr. Martin's trap, drawn by his handsome span of blacks. At a rapid rate we spun out through the city to the Harding Pike, which extends through a country unsurpassed in beauty except by the Blue Grass region of my own State. The long twilight lingered, but gradually was giving place to the soft, sweet radiance of the moon. The air was heavy with the odours of Spring-time blossoms, green fields and freshly-plowed ground. From the fields came the lowing of cattle and the distant, musical tinkle of the sheep bells. Scarcely a word passed between Mr. Martin and me all the way. My heart gave a great throb as we turned

from the pike, and, passing between two massive stone pillars where iron gates stood open, slackened our pace while winding among the noble old trees and through the shrubbery to the mansion at the top of the hill.

My mind was in such a tumult that I suffered my elderly companion to climb to the ground without assistance. Presently I stood beside him and, as one in a dream, saw the coachman drive on, heard Mr. Martin say something to me and laugh, felt him seize my arm and draw me with him toward the steps leading up to the broad porch with its heavy stone columns. The door stood open and I ceased to breathe as a tall, slender, queenly figure in white crossed the brilliantly lighted hall and emerging upon the porch, started at sight of us standing upon the top step.

"A little earlier than you expected, I see," said Mr. Martin, laughing.

"But I'm delighted you have come," was the cordial answer in the low, musical tones I knew so well. "I was going for a walk through the grounds. Come in."

"If you don't mind, we'll join you in your walk. But first I want you to welcome this old friend."

I made a desperate effort for self-control as I

stepped from the shadow of a vine-clad column into the brightness that streamed through the open door.

"Miss Hampton has not entirely forgotten me, I hope?"

She uttered a cry. Involuntarily she started toward me with both hands held out.

"Dav—" She checked herself. "My dear Mr. Lindsay, I am indeed glad to see you." Her hand trembled, but I thought it returned faintly the pressure of my own.

We strolled out among the shrubbery. I was in such a state I scarcely knew what I was saying or doing. I think Mr. Martin did most of the talking. But gradually I mastered my emotion and began to do my share. We found a seat among a clump of trees whence we could see the road curving through the valley and beyond the gate — a white, misty streak. The stone fence near us was covered with blooming honeysuckle whose sweetness perfumed the night. Now and then we heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and the hum of an approaching buggy on the pike, mingled, as it drew near, with the voices and laughter of those who were passing; then in the opposite direction the sounds died away.

My good old friend seized a pretext to leave us.

He had a matter he must discuss with Mr. Saunders, he said. Muriel, quickly rising, announced we would go with him; but he insisted he could find her kinswoman's husband without her and that he would return in a few minutes; so, as I showed no great alacrity to accompany him myself, Muriel was forced to remain with me.

I think that in less than twenty minutes we had discussed with feverish anxiety every subject under the sun except the only one in which just then we were interested. But at last both were at a loss what to say and we sat in awkward silence. I knew Mr. Martin must soon return with Muriel's relatives — that I must speak now, if I was to know my fate that night, as I had resolved.

"Miss Hampton, would you suspect me to be a coward?"

She turned quickly toward me.

"A coward? No. I know better than that."

"Yet I am."

"What do you mean?"

"That I am afraid to ask you a question, because your answer would mean so much to me."

She started, and, turning her face from me, sat looking at the ground.

"Do you remember what you told me the night Dudley reached the island?"

She moved uneasily, but without raising her head.

"Do not talk of that now, please."

"I must."

"That was a long time ago."

"You mean you were mistaken?" I almost choked as I asked her.

"Should it surprise you? Think of what *you* said."

"Nothing I cannot now repeat and with all the truth in me. I love you, Muriel, only God knows how dearly."

She made as if to rise, but I seized her hand and gently detained her.

"You must hear me. I should have come to you the moment I was free, but I thought I had lost you. Your brother's letter gave me that impression. I believed you were to marry Carson. Only yesterday I learned my mistake, and do you see how quickly I am here? Oh, Muriel! I want you to be mine — for ever! Will you? Say again that you love me. Muriel, don't refuse!"

Slowly she faced me, her lovely eyes looking earnestly, unwaveringly into mine.

"David — my husband!"

Three happy years have passed — three years worth thrice the sum of all those gone before. Sometimes I wonder whether heaven can really be better than this.

To-morrow is to be a great day in our home. Dudley, his wife and little ones are here from Detroit. Mr. Martin is also our guest — the guest of honour. Dear old Tom, his mother and sister will be present. Ralph and Aunt Margaret make their home with us.

The young gentleman, the hero of the occasion, lies asleep in his crib. To-morrow I shall be able to give him a more distinctive title; for he is to be christened "George Martin." Our good old friend will be godfather, as he was for the child's mother. Muriel and I have made up our minds he shall give up his dreary existence at Nashville and come and live always with us; and he has half promised. We count upon the little namesake to win him completely to our purpose, and I believe we are safe in that.

THE END.

MERCANTILE LIBRARY,
NEW YORK.

L. C. Page & Company's
Announcement List
of New Fiction

Haunters of the Silences. By CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS, author of "Red Fox," "The Watchers of the Trails," etc.

Cloth, one volume, with many drawings by Charles Livingston Bull, four of which are in full color . $2.00

The stories in Mr. Roberts's new collection are the strongest and best he has ever written.

He has largely taken for his subjects those animals rarely met with in books, whose lives are spent "In the Silences," where they are the supreme rulers. Mr. Roberts has written of them sympathetically, as always, but with fine regard for the scientific truth.

"As a writer about animals, Mr. Roberts occupies an enviable place. He is the most literary, as well as the most imaginative and vivid of all the nature writers." — *Brooklyn Eagle.*

"His animal stories are marvels of sympathetic science and literary exactness." — *New York World.*

The Lady of the Blue Motor.

By G. SIDNEY PATERNOSTER, author of "The Cruise of the Motor-Boat Conqueror," "The Motor Pirate," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by John C. Frohn $1.50

The Lady of the Blue Motor is an audacious heroine who drove her mysterious car at breakneck speed. Her plea for assistance in an adventure promising more than a spice of danger could not of course be disregarded by any gallant fellow motorist. Mr. Paternoster's hero rose promptly to the occasion. Across France they tore and across the English Channel. There, the escapade past, he lost her.

Mr. Paternoster, however, is generous, and allows the reader to follow their separate adventures until the Lady of the Blue Motor is found again and properly vindicated of all save womanly courage and affection. A unique romance, one continuous exciting series of adventure.

Clementina's Highwayman.

By ROBERT NEILSON STEPHENS, author of "The Flight of Georgiana," "An Enemy to the King," etc.

Cloth decorative, illustrated $1.50

Mr. Stephens has put into his new book, "Clementina's Highwayman," the finest qualities of plot, construction, and literary finish.

The story is laid in the mid-Georgian period. It is a dashing, sparkling, vivacious comedy, with a heroine as lovely and changeable as an April day, and a hero all ardor and daring.

The exquisite quality of Mr. Stephens's literary style clothes the story in a rich but delicate word-fabric; and never before have his setting and atmosphere been so perfect.

The Sorceress of Rome. By NATHAN GALLIZIER, author of "Castel del Monte," etc.

Cloth decorative, illustrated $1.50

The love-story of Otto III., the boy emperor, and Stephania, wife of the Senator Crescentius of Rome, has already been made the basis of various German poems and plays.

Mr. Gallizier has used it for the main theme of "The Sorceress of Rome," the second book of his trilogy of romances on the mediæval life of Italy. In detail and finish the book is a brilliant piece of work, describing clearly an exciting and strenuous period. It possesses the same qualities as "Castel del Monte," of which the *Chicago Record Herald* said: "There is color, there is sumptuous word-painting in these pages; the action is terrific at times; vividness and life are in every part; brilliant descriptions entertain the reader; mystic scenes and prophecies give a singular fascination to the tale, which is strong and forceful in its portrayal."

Hester of the Hills. By GILDER CLAY.

Cloth decorative, illustrated $1.50

"Hester of the Hills" has a motif unusual in life, and new in fiction. Its hero, who has only acquired his own strength and resourcefulness by a lifelong struggle against constitutional frailty, has come to make the question of bodily soundness his dominant thought. He resolves to ensure strong constitutions to his children by marrying a physically perfect woman. After long search, he finds this ideal in Hester, the daughter of a "cracker squatter," of the Ozark Mountains of Missouri. But, — he forgot to take into consideration that very vital emotion, love, which played havoc with his well-laid plans.

It is an ingenious combination of practical realism and imaginative fiction worked out to a thoroughly delightful and satisfying climax.

Prisoners of Fortune. A TALE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY. BY RUEL PERLEY SMITH, author of "The Rival Campers," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill $1.50

The period of Mr. Smith's story is the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the shores of the American colonies were harassed and the seas patrolled by pirates and buccaneers. These robbed and spoiled, and often seized and put to death, the sailors and fishers and other humbler folk, while their leaders claimed friendship alike with Southern planters and New England merchants, — with whom it is said they frequently divided their spoils.

The times were stern and the colonists were hardy, but they loved as truly and tenderly as in more peaceful days. Thus, while the hero's adventures with pirates and his search for their hidden treasure is a record of desperate encounters and daring deeds, his love-story and his winning of sweet Mary Vane is in delightful contrast.

The Rome Express. BY MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS, author of "The Passenger from Calais," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by A. O. Scott $1.25

A mysterious murder on a flying express train, a wily Italian, a charming woman caught in the meshes of circumstantial evidence, a chivalrous Englishman, and a police force with a keen nose for the wrong clue, are the ingredients from which Major Griffiths has concocted a clever, up-to-date detective story. The book is bright and spirited, with rapid action, and consistent development which brings the story to a logical and dramatic ending.

The Morning Glory Club. By George A. Kyle.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece by A. O. Scott $1.25

The doings of the Morning Glory Club will furnish genuine amusement to the reader. Originally formed to "elevate" the village, it quickly develops into an exchange for town gossip. It has a saving grace, however, in the person of motherly Mrs. Stout, the uncultured but sweet-natured and pure-minded village philosopher, who pours the oil of her saneness and charity on the troubled waters of discussion and condemnation.

It is a series of clear and interesting pictures of the humor of village life.

The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt, Detective. New Illustrated Edition. By Arthur Morrison, author of "The Green Diamond," "The Red Triangle," etc.

Cloth decorative, with six full-page drawings by W. Kirkpatrick $1.50

The success of Mr. Morrison's recent books, "The Green Diamond" and "The Red Triangle," has led to an imperative demand for the reissue of "The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt," which has been out of print for a number of years.

It will be remembered that Martin Hewitt is the detective in "The Red Triangle," of whom the *New York Tribune* said: "Better than Sherlock Holmes." His adventures in the London slums were of such a nature that the *Philadelphia North American* said: "The reader who has a grain of fancy or imagination may be defied to lay this book down once he has begun it until the last word is reached."

Mystery Island. By Edward H. Hurst.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece . $1.50

A hunting camp on a swampy island in the Florida Everglades furnishes the background for this present-day tale.

By the murder of one of their number, the secret of egress from the island is lost, and the campers find themselves marooned.

Cut off from civilization, conventional veneer soon wears away. Love, hate, and revenge spring up, and after the sterner passions have had their sway the man and the woman are left alone to fulfil their own destiny.

While there is much that is unusual in the plot and its development, Mr. Hurst has handled his subject with fine delicacy, and the tale of their love on the beautiful little island is told with deep sympathy and feeling.

The Flying Cloud. By Morley Roberts, author of "The Promotion of the Admiral," "Rachel Marr," "The Idlers," etc.

Cloth decorative, with a colored frontispiece . $1.50

Mr. Roberts's new book is much more than a ripping good sea story such as might be expected from the author of "The Promotion of the Admiral." In "The Flying Cloud" the waters and the winds are gods personified. Their every mood and phase are described in words of telling force. There is no world but the waste of waters.

Mr. Roberts glories and exults in the mystery, the passion, the strength of the elements, as did the Viking chroniclers of old. He understands them and loves them and interprets them as no other writer has heretofore done. The book is too big for conventional phrases. It needs Mr. Roberts's own richness of imagery and masterly expression to describe adequately the word-pictures in this epic of wind and waves.

Selections from L. C. Page and Company's List of Fiction

WORKS OF ROBERT NEILSON STEPHENS

Each one vol., library 12mo, cloth decorative . . . $1.50

The Flight of Georgiana

A ROMANCE OF THE DAYS OF THE YOUNG PRETENDER. Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

"A love-story in the highest degree, a dashing story, and a remarkably well finished piece of work." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

The Bright Face of Danger

Being an account of some adventures of Henri de Launay, son of the Sieur de la Tournoire. Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

"Mr. Stephens has fairly outdone himself. We thank him heartily. The story is nothing if not spirited and entertaining, rational and convincing." — *Boston Transcript.*

The Mystery of Murray Davenport

(40th thousand.)

"This is easily the best thing that Mr. Stephens has yet done. Those familiar with his other novels can best judge the measure of this praise, which is generous." — *Buffalo News.*

Captain Ravenshaw

OR, THE MAID OF CHEAPSIDE. (52d thousand.) A romance of Elizabethan London. Illustrations by Howard Pyle and other artists.

Not since the absorbing adventures of D'Artagnan have we had anything so good in the blended vein of romance and comedy.

The Continental Dragoon

A ROMANCE OF PHILIPSE MANOR HOUSE IN 1778. (53d thousand.) Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

A stirring romance of the Revolution, with its scene laid on neutral territory.

Philip Winwood

(70th thousand.) A Sketch of the Domestic History of an American Captain in the War of Independence, embracing events that occurred between and during the years 1763 and 1785 in New York and London. Illustrated by E. W. D. Hamilton.

An Enemy to the King

(70th thousand.) From the "Recently Discovered Memoirs of the Sieur de la Tournoire." Illustrated by H. De M. Young.

An historical romance of the sixteenth century, describing the adventures of a young French nobleman at the court of Henry III., and on the field with Henry IV.

The Road to Paris

A STORY OF ADVENTURE. (35th thousand.) Illustrated by H. C. Edwards.

An historical romance of the eighteenth century, being an account of the life of an American gentleman adventurer of Jacobite ancestry.

A Gentleman Player

HIS ADVENTURES ON A SECRET MISSION FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH. (48th thousand.) Illustrated by Frank T. Merrill.

The story of a young gentleman who joins Shakespeare's company of players, and becomes a friend and protégé of the great poet.

WORKS OF

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

Red Fox

THE STORY OF HIS ADVENTUROUS CAREER IN THE RINGWAAK WILDS, AND OF HIS FINAL TRIUMPH OVER THE ENEMIES OF HIS KIND. With fifty illustrations, including frontispiece in color and cover design by Charles Livingston Bull.

Square quarto, cloth decorative $2.00

"Infinitely more wholesome reading than the average tale of sport, since it gives a glimpse of the hunt from the point of view of the hunted." — *Boston Transcript.*

"True in substance but fascinating as fiction. It will interest old and young, city-bound and free-footed, those who know animals and those who do not." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

"A brilliant chapter in natural history." — *Philadelphia North American.*

The Kindred of the Wild

A BOOK OF ANIMAL LIFE. With fifty-one full-page plates and many decorations from drawings by Charles Livingston Bull.
Square quarto, decorative cover $2.00

"Is in many ways the most brilliant collection of animal stories that has appeared; well named and well done." — *John Burroughs.*

The Watchers of the Trails

A companion volume to "The Kindred of the Wild." With forty-eight full-page plates and many decorations from drawings by Charles Livingston Bull.
Square quarto, decorative cover $2.00

"These stories are exquisite in their refinement, and yet robust in their appreciation of some of the rougher phases of woodcraft. Among the many writers about animals, Mr. Roberts occupies an enviable place. — *The Outlook.*

"This is a book full of delight. An additional charm lies in Mr. Bull's faithful and graphic illustrations, which in fashion all their own tell the story of the wild life, illuminating and supplementing the pen pictures of the author." — *Literary Digest.*

The Heart That Knows

Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"A novel of singularly effective strength, luminous in literary color, rich in its passionate, yet tender drama." — *New York Globe.*

Earth's Enigmas

A new edition of Mr. Roberts's first volume of fiction, published in 1892, and out of print for several years, with the addition of three new stories, and ten illustrations by Charles Livingston Bull.
Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"It will rank high among collections of short stories. In 'Earth's Enigmas' is a wider range of subject than in the 'Kindred of the Wild.'" — *Review from advance sheets of the illustrated edition by Tiffany Blake in the Chicago Evening Post.*

Barbara Ladd

With four illustrations by Frank Verbeck.
Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"From the opening chapter to the final page Mr. Roberts lures us on by his rapt devotion to the changing aspects of Nature and by his keen and sympathetic analysis of human character." — *Boston Transcript.*

Cameron of Lochiel

Translated from the French of Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, with frontispiece in color by H. C. Edwards.
Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"Professor Roberts deserves the thanks of his reader for giving a wider audience an opportunity to enjoy this striking bit of French Canadian literature." — *Brooklyn Eagle.*

"It is not often in these days of sensational and philosophical novels that one picks up a book that so touches the heart." — *Boston Transcript.*

The Prisoner of Mademoiselle

With frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill.
Library 12mo, cloth decorative, gilt top $1.50

A tale of Acadia, — a land which is the author's heart's delight, — of a valiant young lieutenant and a winsome maiden, who first captures and then captivates.

"This is the kind of a story that makes one grow younger, more innocent, more light-hearted. Its literary quality is impeccable. It is not every day that such a heroine blossoms into even temporary existence, and the very name of the story bears a breath of charm." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

The Heart of the Ancient Wood

With six illustrations by James L. Weston.
Library 12mo, decorative cover $1.50

"One of the most fascinating novels of recent days." — *Boston Journal.*

"A classic twentieth-century romance." — *New York Commercial Advertiser.*

The Forge in the Forest

Being the Narrative of the Acadian Ranger, Jean de Mer, Seigneur de Briart, and how he crossed the Black Abbé, and of his adventures in a strange fellowship. Illustrated by Henry Sandham, R. C. A.
Library 12mo, cloth, gilt top $1.50

A story of pure love and heroic adventure.

By the Marshes of Minas

Library 12mo, cloth, gilt top, illustrated $1.50

Most of these romances are in the author's lighter and more playful vein; each is a unit of absorbing interest and exquisite workmanship.

A Sister to Evangeline

Being the Story of Yvonne de Lamourie, and how she went into exile with the villagers of Grand Pré.

Library 12mo, cloth, gilt top, illustrated $1.50

Swift action, fresh atmosphere, wholesome purity, deep passion, and searching analysis characterize this strong novel.

WORKS OF

LILIAN BELL

Carolina Lee

With a frontispiece in color from an oil painting by Dora Wheeler Keith. Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"A Christian Science novel, full of action, alive with incident and brisk with pithy dialogue and humor." — *Boston Transcript.*

"A charming portrayal of the attractive life of the South, refreshing as a breeze that blows through a pine forest." — *Albany Times-Union.*

Hope Loring

Illustrated by Frank T. Merrill.

Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"Tall, slender, and athletic, fragile-looking, yet with nerves and sinews of steel under the velvet flesh, frank as a boy and tender and beautiful as a woman, free and independent, yet not bold — such is 'Hope Loring,' by long odds the subtlest study that has yet been made of the American girl." — *Dorothy Dix, in the New York American.*

Abroad with the Jimmies

With a portrait, in duogravure, of the author.

Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"Full of ozone, of snap, of ginger, of swing and momentum." — *Chicago Evening Post.*

At Home with the Jardines

A companion volume to "Abroad with the Jimmies."

Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"Bits of gay humor, sunny, whimsical philosophy, and keen indubitable insight into the less evident aspects and workings of pure human nature, with a slender thread of a cleverly extraneous love story, keep the interest of the reader fresh." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

The Interference of Patricia

With a frontispiece from drawing by Frank T. Merrill.
Small 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.25

"There is life and action and brilliancy and dash and cleverness and a keen appreciation of business ways in this story." — *Grand Rapids Herald.*

"A story full of keen and flashing satire." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

A Book of Girls

With a frontispiece.
Small 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.25

"The stories are all eventful and have effective humor." — *New York Sun.*

"Lilian Bell surely understands girls, for she depicts all the variations of girl nature so charmingly." — *Chicago Journal.*

The above two volumes boxed in special holiday dress, per set, $2.50

WORKS OF

ALICE MacGOWAN AND GRACE MacGOWAN COOKE

Return

A STORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS IN 1739. With six illustrations by C. D. Williams.
Library 12mo, cloth $1.50

"So rich in color is this story, so crowded with figures, it seems like a bit of old Italian wall painting, a piece of modern tapestry, rather than a modern fabric woven deftly from the threads of fact and fancy gathered up in this new and essentially practical country, and therein lies its distinctive value and excellence." — *N. Y. Sun.*

"At once tender, thrilling, picturesque, philosophical, and dramatic. One of the most delightful romances we have had in many a day." — *Chicago Record-Herald.*

The Grapple

With frontispiece in color by Arthur W. Brown.
Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"The movement of the tale is swift and dramatic. The story is so original, so strong, and so finely told that it deserves a large and thoughtful public. It is a book to read with both enjoyment and enlightenment." — *N. Y. Times Saturday Review of Books.*

The Last Word

Illustrated with seven portraits of the heroine.

Library 12mo, cloth, decorative cover $1.50

"When one receives full measure to overflowing of delight in a tender, charming, and wholly fascinating new piece of fiction, the enthusiasm is apt to come uppermost." — *Louisville Post.*

Huldah

With illustrations by Fanny Y. Cory.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

Here we have the great-hearted, capable woman of the Texas plains dispensing food and genial philosophy to rough-and-ready cowboys. Her sympathy takes the form of happy laughter, and her delightfully funny phrases amuse the fancy and stick in one's memory.

WORKS OF
MORLEY ROBERTS

Rachel Marr

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"A novel of tremendous force, with a style that is sure, luxuriant, compelling, full of color and vital force." — *Elia W. Peattie, in Chicago Tribune.*

"In atmosphere, if nothing else, the story is absolutely perfect." — *Boston Transcript.*

Lady Penelope

With nine illustrations by Arthur W. Brown.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"A fresh and original bit of comedy as amusing as it is audacious." — *Boston Transcript.*

The Idlers

With frontispiece in color by John C. Frohn.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"In 'The Idlers' Mr. Morley Roberts does for the smart set of London what Mrs. Wharton has done in 'The House of Mirth' for the American social class of the same name. . . . It is a powerful novel, a merciless dissection of modern society similar to that which a skilled surgeon would make of a pathological case." — *The London Literary World.*

"It is as absorbing as the devil. Mr. Roberts gives us the antithesis of 'Rachel Marr' in an equally masterful and convincing work." — *The New York Sun.*

"It is a work of great ethical force." — *Professor Charles G. D. Roberts.*

The Promotion of the Admiral

By MORLEY ROBERTS.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, illustrated $1.50

"If any one writes better sea stories than Mr. Roberts, we don't know who it is; and if there is a better sea story of its kind than this it would be a joy to have the pleasure of reading it."—*New York Sun.*

"There is a hearty laugh in every one of these stories."—*The Reader.*

"To read these stories is a tonic for the mind; the stories are gems, and for pith and vigor of description they are unequalled."—*N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.*

WORKS OF

STEPHEN CONRAD

The Second Mrs. Jim

By STEPHEN CONRAD. With a frontispiece by Ernest Fosbery.

Large 16mo, cloth decorative $1.00

Here is a character as original and witty as "Mr. Dooley" or "the self-made merchant." The realm of humorous fiction is now invaded by the stepmother.

"It is an exceptionally clever piece of work."—*Boston Transcript.*

"'The Second Mrs. Jim' is worth as many Mrs. Wiggses as could be crowded into the Cabbage Patch. The racy humor and cheerfulness and wisdom of the book make it wholly delightful."—*Philadelphia Press.*

Mrs. Jim and Mrs. Jimmie

With a frontispiece in colors by Arthur W. Brown.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

This book is in a sense a sequel to "The Second Mrs. Jim," since it gives further glimpses of that delightful stepmother and her philosophy.

"Plenty of fun and humor in this book. Plenty of simple pathos and quietly keen depiction of human nature afford contrast, and every chapter is worth reading. It is a very human account of life in a small country town, and the work should be commended for those sterling qualities of heart and naturalness so endearing to many."—*Chicago Record-Herald.*

WORKS OF

ARTHUR MORRISON

The Green Diamond

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with six illustrations . $1.50

"A detective story of unusual ingenuity and intrigue." — *Brooklyn Eagle.*

The Red Triangle

Being some further chronicles of Martin Hewitt, investigator.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

"Better than Sherlock Holmes." — *New York Tribune.*

"The reader who has a grain of fancy or imagination may be defied to lay this book down, once he has begun it, until the last word has been reached." — *Philadelphia North American.*

WORKS OF

G. SIDNEY PATERNOSTER

The Motor Pirate

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with frontispiece . . $1.50

"Its originality, exciting adventures, into which is woven a charming love theme, and its undercurrent of fun furnish a dashing detective story which a motor-mad world will thoroughly enjoy reading." — *Boston Herald.*

The Cruise of the Motor-Boat Conqueror

Being the Further Adventures of the Motor Pirate.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with a frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill $1.50

"As a land pirate Mannering was a marvel of resource, but as a sea-going buccaneer he is almost a miracle of devilish ingenuity. His exploits are wonderful and plausible, for he avails himself of every modern device and applies recent inventions to the accomplishment of all his pet schemes." — *Chicago Evening Post.*

WORKS OF

T. JENKINS HAINS

The Black Barque

With five illustrations by W. Herbert Dunton.

Library 12mo, cloth $1.50

According to a high naval authority, whose name must be withheld, this is one of the best sea stories ever offered to the public. "The Black Barque" is a story of slavery and piracy upon the high seas about 1815, and is written with a thorough knowledge of deep-water sailing.

The Windjammers

Library 12mo, cloth $1.50

"A collection of short sea stories unmatched for interest." — *New York Sun.*

The Voyage of the Arrow

With six illustrations by H. C. Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth $1.50

"A capital story, full of sensation and excitement, and a rollicking sea story of the good old-fashioned sort. The reader who begins this exciting voyage will sail on at the rate of twelve knots an hour until it is finished." — *Boston Transcript.*

WORKS OF

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

Miss Frances Baird, Detective

A PASSAGE FROM HER MEMOIRS.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative, with a frontispiece by W. F. Kirkpatrick $1.25

"Miss Baird ravels and unravels circumstantial evidence in her search for the murderer in a most bewildering and thoroughly feminine fashion. . . . The story is brimful of excitement, and no little ingenuity is displayed in its construction." — *Boston Herald.*

Jarvis of Harvard

Illustrated by Robert Edwards.

Library 12mo, cloth decorative $1.50

A strong and well written novel, dealing with the life of a young man in a modern college. Studies, athletics, social life, and the outside influences surrounding the youth of a college town are clearly depicted.

"Mr. Kauffman's treatment of his subject is dignified, restrained, sincere, and in admirable good taste throughout." — *New York Mail and Express.*